



The Bougainvillea, a versatile, evergreen desert woody vine, flowers several times throughout the year and is native to the Brazilian coast. The most common type of Bougainvillea plant in the Southwest has vibrant reddish pink flowers; however some varieties have more pink, salmon or purple blooms. This resilient and drought tolerant plant grows in a variety of different manners, including climbing vines and bushes, and can be trained to grow in various shapes and in many different sized spaces.



Before the Frost Comes

During the fall months, balanced pruning is needed for your Bougainvillea plant. Pruning should be done to keep the plant from encroaching on walkways or to keep the plant within its boundaries. However, you want to make sure not to drastically prune before frost season so you do not expose sensitive parts of the plant to the freezing temperatures. When the frost blankets the ground, the large portions of the plant that remain will turn a brownish black color and the leaves will drop, leaving just the stick portion of the plant for the winter. If you prune your plant excessively in the fall, there will not be much of the plant left when the frost damage is pruned away next spring. To ready your plant for the winter months, stop watering it around Thanksgiving for the winter and start watering again around mid-February when the daytime temperatures return to the 80s.



Allowed to grow naturally throughout spring and summer



Pruned in spring to avoid frost damage.

Winter

In the colder months, it is recommended that you not prune your Bougainvillea plant to help protect it from frost damage. For younger plants, you may want to cover your Bougainvillea with a light cloth or sheet on nights when frost is a threat. If your plant suffers frost damage, you should wait to prune it until spring when the frost threat is gone since the damaged portions of the plants act as insulation for the rest of the plant throughout the winter.

When Spring Arrives

Now that the frost has gone, it is time to prune your Bougainvillea to ready it for the new growing season. You can choose to do a light prune, like you did in the fall and trim just the extremities of the plant or a hard prune which means you cut the plant down to almost the base to stimulate all new growth. When pruning, be sure to wear protective clothing as the Bougainvillea is a thorny plant. When daytime temperatures consistently reach the 80s again, you can begin regularly watering your plant material.

Planting New Bougainvillea

When installing a new Bougainvillea plant, you should keep a couple of things in mind. Since Bougainvillea can grow in a variety of space sizes, be sure to consider the fine root system of the plant and plant it in well-drained soils to prevent root rot. These plants prefer direct sunlight for at least 5 hours a day and because of the plants' constant blooms, it might not be the best plant to plant near a pool.

