



SHOULD IT STAY OR SHOULD IT GO?

Deciding whether a plant earns its place in the garden

THE SHORT ANSWER

Judge the plant at its worst moment, then confirm at its best.

Never decide on peak bloom alone — that's when everything looks forgivable.

AT ITS PEAK

Full bloom hides the mildew, the spraying, the legginess. Peak performance hides the real cost of the plant.

AT ITS WORST

The post-bloom slump shows the plant's true baseline — what it costs you, most of the year, for that one moment.



THE TWO-POINT CHECK

Note the plant at its low point. Ask whether its high point is worth that trade-off.

FOUR QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. Repeat performance

Does it rebloom, or was that one flush the whole show?

2. Foliage integrity

Healthy leaves through summer, or tired and spotted early?

3. Recovery speed

How fast does it bounce back after a hard prune?

4. Effort vs. reward

Be honest about the spraying and babying it takes.

THE SIMPLE RULE

If it earns your admiration even when it's not trying, keep it.

If it only earns its keep for two weeks, it's asking a lot of one shrub.