

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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If cabin fever is overcoming you, then you may want to get outside and complete your pruning chores. Most trees and shrubs can be successfully pruned in late winter or early spring. Rapid callous development occurs during this time of year and enables fast closure of wounds. Insect and disease pathogens are at low levels and will not interfere with the tree's defenses. Absence of foliage makes it easy to view the general structure of the tree, enabling removal of appropriate branches.

Some trees such as maple, walnut and birch will "bleed" in the early spring when a cut is made. Although unsightly, sap flowing from a cut branch is part of the tree's defense system and causes minimal injury to the tree.

An excellent time to prune oaks is in February and March. This will help prevent the spread of Oak Wilt disease.

Summer flowering shrubs such as potentilla and spirea, which bloom in summer on current year's growth, should be pruned in late winter or early spring. Deciduous shrubs should be pruned in late winter or early spring before growth begins. Pruning these shrubs in late summer (July or August) encourage a late flush of growth that may not sufficiently harden before the onset of cold weather which could result in winter injury.

Evergreen shrubs, such as juniper and yew, are best pruned in late March to early April, before new growth occurs. Light pruning can also be done in late June or early July.

The best time to prune fruit trees is from late February to early April. Fruit trees pruned in the fall or early winter may be susceptible to winter injury.

Grapevines should be pruned in March or early April. When pruned during this period of time, they will bleed heavily, but that is not considered a problem.

Raspberries should be pruned in March or early April. Summer bearing raspberries also require summer pruning. Remove the old fruiting canes of summer-bearing raspberries after the summer crop has been harvested. Also pinch out the shoot tips of purple and black raspberries when new growth reaches a height of 36 inches.

The time to prune spring flowering shrubs, such as lilacs and forsythia, is dependent upon their condition. Old neglected spring flowering shrubs that are large and overgrown would best be pruned in March or early April. This will reduce or eliminate flowering for a few years but would improve the long term health of the shrubs. If they need only light pruning, then prune immediately after bloom, which will then allow enough time to initiate new flower buds for the next season.

For a more complete review of pruning tips, contact the Grundy Office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979 and ask for publication Pm-1304.