Pruning Trees and Shrubs

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Pruning

- Why should we prune
- When to prune
- How to prune
- Tools to use
Importance of Pruning

- Safety
- Appearance
- Health/form
- Production
Be careful not to over prune!
• No lower branches
• No stem taper
• Slower growth
When to prune trees

• Best time: late dormant season (December thru February)
• Bleeders (maples, walnuts, birches): prune in summer, late August thru October
• Times to avoid:
  – Spring growth
  – Leaf color change
  – Summer pruning of oaks
DO NOT PRUNE OAKS DURING SUMMER MONTHS

- Avoid pruning oaks March 1st to October 15, active time of nitidulid beetles
- Risk of transmitting oak wilt very high in summertime
- Damages red oak family more than white oaks
Pruning Guidelines

1. Correct multiple leaders
2. Dead or dying limbs
3. Rubbing or crossing limbs
4. Obtaining proper branch height
Pruning Guidelines

• Do not remove more than 25% of overall canopy in 1 year
  – Fruit trees can handle more severe pruning to encourage increased number and size of fruits
• Leave lower branches for 3-5 years after planting
  – Remove branches when they are 1-2” in caliper
How to prune – 3 cuts

1. Cut small notch bottom→top, thru ¼ of branch, several inches up from branch collar.
2. Cut top→bottom through branch just outside first notch
3. Cut branch stub off top→bottom along branch collar
Wound Dressings?

• Wounds dressings commonplace pre-1990’s

• Use no longer recommended

• A proper cut will heal on its own

• Do cover summer wounds on oaks
  – Interior latex-based paint, one coat
  – Blocks picnic beetles from transmitting Oak Wilt.
When to prune shrubs & fruit trees

• Spring flowering: immediately after bloom, between bloom end and seed production
• Midsummer and fall flowering: late winter before buds expand (Dec-March)
• Showy bark during winter: late winter (Dec-March)
• Fruit trees: late winter to early spring, before buds expand
Pruning Shrubs

Pruning cuts in relationship to stem buds

- 45° angle: Good cut.
- Too angular: Not good.
- Too low: Not good.
- Too high: Not good.
- Opposite: Good cut.
Pruning techniques for shrubs

Healthy shrubs:
- **Heading cut** → increased fullness and growth
- **Thinning cut** → open canopy, reduce overall size

Overgrown shrubs:
- **Rejuvenation** → gradual regrowth while retaining appearance
- **Renovation** → harsh regrowth, new shrub from old shrub
Pruning Apple Trees

• Desired look:
  – One main stem with scaffold branches
  – Dwarf and some semi-dwarfs designed for trellis system
  – Semi-dwarf to full standards are self supporting

• What to remove:
  – Water sprouts
  – Branches that go straight up or down
  – Branches that are crossing/rubbing
  – Branches directly above/below other branches that are closer than 2-3 feet
Pruning Pear Trees

• All about managing light availability

1. Pears do not understand what you are trying to make them do
2. Pears will grow up at ALL COSTS
3. Pears would rather give up and die than conform to your will
Tools

- Pruning shears
- Pruning loppers
- Hand saw
- Pole saw

Do not use anvil style shears
Questions?

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