Tips on Pruning Timing and Techniques

Early spring is a great time to prune many trees and shrubs. Start by making sure your pruning tools are nice and sharp. Then check out the following pruning tips for successful snipping this spring.

1. Summer flowering shrubs that bloom on the current season's growth, such as panicle hydrangea, rose-of-Sharon, and Japanese spirea, can be pruned in early spring to shape the plants, remove older or damaged branches and promote flowering. Plants that are used in formal hedges and foundation plantings such as yew and privet can be trimmed with hedge shears to shape and to spur new growth.

2. Wait to prune spring flowering shrubs such as forsythia, lilac, deutzia, and spring flowering spireas until shortly after they have finished blooming. Their flower buds are already formed and pruning before bloom will decrease the floral show. Azaleas can be pruned immediately after they are through blooming to maintain their form. On rhododendrons, remove all spent blooms by snipping or snapping them off at the base of the flower truss, taking care not to damage the buds or new growth arising at the base of the flower truss. To increase blooms, pinch off about an inch of new growth to encourage more shoots to form that will each develop flower buds. Otherwise, broadleaf evergreens need little pruning except when they are young. If you choose a plant whose mature size fits the space allotted to it, you'll only need to do a little light trimming to shape any wayward growth.

(continued on page 2)
4. Start spring clean-up of **roses** by cutting out all wood that died over the winter. Cut canes back to healthy, live wood just above an outward-facing bud. Then prune to shape the bush and achieve the desired height.

5. Trim evergreen shrubs like **junipers** from the bottom up. Shorten branches that are expanding beyond the desired length by cutting them back to a lower branch beneath an overhanging branch. This provides a cleaner look, with the cuts hidden by the branches above.

6. To encourage denser growth or control size, prune **pines** by snapping off the ends of the new growth “candles” before the needles begin to expand. Trim one-third to one-half of the candles to form a fairly dense tree. If you need to severely restrict the current year’s growth, some of the candles can be completely removed at their base.

7. For denser growth, prune **spruce** by cutting back the long tip of new growth just above the point where the side shoots are forming.

8. The more judicious pruning you do on young deciduous trees, the better off they will be. Remove crossing or rubbing branches, along with ones that are growing at an angle of thirty degrees or less relative to the trunk, as they are weakly joined and more likely to break off in storms. Remove branches that are growing closer to the ground than you would like once they reach about an inch in diameter. Leaving these branches in place when they are smaller than an inch in diameter will result in better root development and a sturdier trunk. Cut back branches to their point origin at the trunk or a lower branch; do not leave stubs. Small twigs can be cut back to a bud to encourage more branching.

9. When pruning, remove a branch without damaging the tissue of the trunk or the branch it is attached to in the process. Look for the branch-bark ridge (the raised area on the upper surface of the branch where it meets the trunk or larger branch). Then find the branch collar (the bulge that forms at the base of the branch where it intersects with the trunk larger branch). Start your cut just outside the branch-bark ridge and angle it down to just outside the branch collar below. This type of cut exposes only branch tissue, leaving neither a gash against the trunk nor an unsightly stub and helps the cut heal over more readily.

10. Don’t cover pruning cuts with tree paint. Research has shown that sealing cuts and wounds on trees does not speed healing and can, in fact, promote decay.

11. The earlier the better is the motto for pruning most shade and fruit trees. Pruning can be done any time temperatures are above twenty degrees and before spring growth starts.

12. Prune fruit trees to open up the interior, which will allow more light to reach into the crown and promote better fruit production. Pruning methods vary by kind of fruit tree grown. There are even some differences for particular cultivars within a species. Check with your local nursery, garden center, or extension agent for detailed instructions.

*Steve Trusty has a degree in horticulture from Iowa State University. He has been helping gardeners receive more enjoyment from their lawns and gardens for years through radio, TV, books, magazines and websites.*
Jefferson County Master Gardener

MARCH 2018

Master Gardener Coordinator Update

The next meeting of the Jefferson County Master Gardener (JCMG) Chapter is March 13 beginning at 6:30 pm in the Viking Room on Jefferson College campus. The educational piece of the program will be Paula McBurnett, MG Class of 2001. Paula transferred her MG membership from Greene County to Jefferson County when she moved to Jefferson County. Her presentation theme will be “Gardening and Volunteering Converge”. You can read more about Paula below. After Paula’s presentation will be the Celebration of Volunteers. Hats and pins will be awarded to MG Volunteers who logged over 100 hours in 2017. So be sure to come out and help us celebrate these fabulous volunteers.

The Master Gardener Level I course started on Feb 26 with 25 participants. It is a lively group willing to ask questions and learn all they can. The JCMG Chapter officers were present and welcomed the MG Trainees.

There are two classes of the MG Level I course with new presenters that if you attend can be considered as Level II Advanced Training.

- March 26 – Annuals/Perennials with Vicki Lander, Flower Hill Farm
- April 30 – Trees & Shrubs: Care & Pruning with Brian Maddox, Forestry Consultant

If you plan on attending, let me know so I will have enough handouts for everyone that evening.

Paula Hopkins McBurnett, MG Class of 2001

Paula has been gardening since she was 9-years old and a member of the Tom Thumb Junior Garden Club, Terrace Lake Gardens in Kansas City. A native Missourian, her love of growing annuals, perennials and vegetables was nurtured by her mother and maternal grandmother. She completed the MG certification in 2001 in the Greene-County MG program, Springfield, MO. As a member there, she served as a volunteer at the Demonstration Gardens in Nathanael Greene Park (now a part of the Botanical Gardens), the editor of the Grapevine Newsletter, and as chair of the welcome committee for the State MG Conference in 2006. From 2007-2014 years, Paula and her late husband, Steve, concentrated on saving seeds and growing heirloom tomatoes, peppers, garlic, herbs, beans and corn at their farm, Goodland Gardens in Iron County, MO. They were members of the Belleview Valley Natural Gardeners and Artisans. Paula joined the Jefferson County Master Gardeners in 2015 and is a member of Seed Savers Exchange and the American Horticulture Society. She currently gardens at her home, Marigold Cottage, in Hoene Springs, Eureka. To support her gardening passion, Paula works as senior associate director of development for Washington University, School of Engineering & Applied Science, in St. Louis.

Happy Gardening!

Find the answer somewhere in this newsletter :)
Calendar of Events

March

8 - Pesticide Safety and Use at Potosi, MO
   573-438-2671; Registration fee: $10

10 - Native Plant and Garden Seminar at the Cape Nature Center in Cape Girardeau, MO.

13 – Bimonthly Meeting, Viking Room on Jefferson College Campus, Hillsboro, MO

15 - High Tunnel Workshop in Sikeston, MO

26 – Level I Class – Flowers, Viking Room, Jefferson College Campus, Hillsboro, MO (Level II class) Call ahead of time to RSVP – 636-797-5391

31 - Growing Green Garden Conference in Rolla, MO

April

10 – Totally Tomatoes, Cape Girardeau, MO.
   Call 573-339-6340

12 – Native Wild Edibles, Shaw Nature Preserve, Grey Summit, MO. Call 314-577-5140 (Level II class)

26 – Blackberry Workshop, Farmington, MO.
   Call 573-883-3548 (Level II class)

30 – Level I Class – Trees and Shrubs, Viking Room, Jefferson College Campus, Hillsboro, MO (Level II class) Call ahead of time to RSVP – 636-797-5391

Out in the Wild in March

1. Red maples begin to bloom.
2. Set up nesting boxes for bluebirds.
3. Watch for the harbinger of spring (Erigenia bulbosa) blooming in rich wooded areas.
4. Spicebush is blooming in moist woodlands.
5. Raise purple martin houses this week.
6. Purple martins return to the St. Louis area.
7. The white flowers of serviceberry (Amelanchier sp.) and wild plum (Prunus americana) are showy in wooded areas.
8. Watch for the fuzzy blooms of the pussy willow (Salix sp.)

May

5 – Kress Farm Plant Sale, Hillsboro, MO

15 – Bimonthly Meeting, Viking Room on Jefferson College Campus, Hillsboro, MO

17 - Gardening under a Black Walnut Grove, Shaw Nature Preserve, Grey Summit, MO. Call 314-577-5140 (Level II class)

June

14 - The Art of Combining Native Perennials, Shaw Nature Preserve, Grey Summit, MO.
   Call 314-577-5140 (Level II class)

July

10 – Bimonthly Meeting, Viking Room on Jefferson College Campus, Hillsboro, MO

12 - Flower Arranging with Native Plants, Shaw Nature Preserve, Grey Summit, MO. Call 314-577-5140 (Level II class)

August

9 - Pondscaping with Native Plants, Shaw Nature Preserve, Grey Summit, MO. Call 314-577-5140 (Level II class)
Selecting a good potting soil for your indoor plants is an important decision. The proper soil for your plant will provide the best conditions for good root growth and nutrient uptake. On the other hand, poorly mixed soils will give you less than satisfactory results, with short-lived plants. To select the proper soil for your plants, you need to think about the plant's requirements and your own plant care habits.

The plant's requirements are dictated by where the plant is found in nature. Is it native to an arid desert? Or a tropical rainforest? In what types of soils does it grow in its native environment? If you are not sure of your plant's preferences, pick up a copy of Guide Sheet G6510, "Caring for House Plants", from your local MU Extension center. This reference lists many common houseplants and their soil requirements.

Your own plant care habits can also influence potting soil selection. Do you tend to overwater? You may want to use materials in your soil which improve drainage. If your plants dry out too fast, you should add ingredients such as sphagnum peat moss or other organic materials to increase water retention.

If you have only a few plants, you may choose to buy a ready-made mix. This saves time and work. If you have a plant with special soil requirements, you may start with a commercial mix, and modify it to suit your needs. If you have a lot of plants, you may choose to make your potting soil from scratch. This will save you money, and will give you exactly what your plants require.

Often the basic starting ingredient is garden loam or topsoil. Loam soils are classified between sandy soils and clay soils. Since most soils are not pure loams, they are usually classified as sandy loams, silty loams, silty clay loams, or clay loams. Knowing how much sand or clay is in your basic mix will help fine tune your final potting soil.

So where do you start? A good basic mix for most houseplants will have equal portions of garden loam, sphagnum peat moss, and clean sharp builders sand. Be sure that the sand is not too fine. Coarse sands provide better drainage. If you can't find a good coarse sand, perlite may be substituted. A third choice would be vermiculite, if neither builder's sand or perlite can be found.

Some people prefer soil-less mixes, such as vermiculite, perlite and sphagnum peat moss. These may work well, but be sure to fertilize frequently and carefully. These mixes do not hold fertilizer well. You may also need to add micronutrients from time to time.

What about using soil from your own garden? This can be done, with caution. The problem is that you may be introducing unwanted pests or plant diseases. The solution is to pasteurize the soil before using it in your mix. You may do this in your oven, or even in an outdoor covered barbecue pit. But, be forewarned... this is a very smelly process.

The soil should be placed in a large covered kettle. It should be moist, but not too wet. Bake it at 180 degrees until the center has reached a minimum of 140 degrees. Let the soil cool before using. Then use the soil as a base for your mix, modifying it by adding the appropriate amendments. While pasteurization may seem like a lot of trouble, it may eliminate problems later on. This is especially true when you are starting plants from seed, where damping off problems may occur.

What about compost? This can be an excellent material to add to your potting mix. Be sure that it is well-composted, and has heated up well during the composting process to provide pasteurizing protection. Leaf compost is especially good, providing a good source of organic matter. Use it alone or in combination with sphagnum peat moss.
Missouri Botanical Highlights

Orchid Show

February 3 to March 25
Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily

Immerse yourself in a tropical oasis brimming with vibrant blooming orchids at the Orchid Show, a once-a-year opportunity to view a rotating display of hundreds of orchids from the Garden’s expansive living collection.

Peer through lush foliage, bubbling fountains, and trailing vines as you are transported to an exotic hideaway within the Orthwein Floral Display Hall, and explore the "orchid mania" of the Victorian era, a time when passionate plant enthusiasts sought to collect and cultivate newly discovered orchid species, no matter what the trial, tribulation or cost.

Orchids By the Numbers

The Garden’s orchid collection includes:

- Approximately 6,500 individual plants
- 686 unique taxa (different kinds of plants)
- Representatives from 20% of known genera
- 192 wild source accessions (7% of the collection)
- 89 accessions which are threatened/endangered (9%)

I’M A
FLOWERING SUCCULENT!!

Most succulents are grown for their architectural foliage, but there’s a group that sports equally eye-catching flowers. Easy to grow, these drought-loving plants thrive in sunny areas and produce richly colored blooms over many weeks.

Web Links:
- Garden Spade
- Jefferson County Master Gardeners
- State Master Gardeners
- Kress Garden Newsletter

For more information on events and things to do, check out the Missouri Botanical website.
March Gardening Calendar

Ornamentals

- Plant trees, shrubs and perennials as soon as they are available at local nurseries.
- To control iris borer, clean up and destroy old foliage before new growth begins.
- Loosen winter mulches from perennials cautiously. Re-cover plants at night if frost returns. Clean up beds by removing all weeds and dead foliage at this time.
- Heavy pruning of trees should be complete before growth occurs.
- Direct sow seeds of hardy annuals such as larkspur, bachelor’s buttons, Shirley and California poppies.
- Summer and fall blooming perennials should be divided in spring.
- Cut ornamental grasses to the ground just as the new growth begins.
- Spring bedding plants may be planted outdoors now.
- Apply fertilizer such as 6-12-12 to perennial beds when new growth appears.
- Apply granular sulfur to soils around acid-loving plants at rate of ½#/ 100 sq ft.
- Gradually pull back mulch from rose bushes.

Lawns

- Mow lawns low to remove old growth before new growth begins.
- Apply broadleaf herbicides now for control of cool-season perennial and annual weeds. Do not apply to areas that will be seeded soon.
- Thin spots and bare patches in the lawn can be overseeded now.

Vegetables

- Fertilize when the garden soil is being prepared for planting. Unless directed otherwise by a soil test, 1 to 2 pounds of 12-12-12 or an equivalent fertilizer per 100 square feet is usually sufficient.
- Delay planting if the garden soil is too wet.
- Plant asparagus and rhubarb as soon as the ground can be worked.
- Plant peas, lettuce, radishes, kohlrabi, mustard greens, collards, turnips, Irish potatoes, spinach and onions, beets, carrots, parsley, parsnip seeds outdoors.
- Set out broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, Chinese cabbage and cauliflower transplants into the garden.
- Start seeds of tomatoes, peppers and eggplants indoors.

Fruits

- Gradually remove mulch from strawberries as the weather begins to warm.
- Continue pruning apple trees. Destroy prunings to minimize insect/disease occurrence.
- Continue pruning grapes. Bleeding causes no injury to the vines. Tie vines to the trellis before the buds swell to prevent bud injury and crop loss.
- Apply dormant oil sprays on a dry day when freezing temperatures are not expected.
- Spray peach trees with a fungicide for the control of peach leaf curl disease.
- Mulch all brambles for weed control.
- Prune peaches and nectarines just before they bloom.

-Missouri Botanical Garden-