

## PEST ALERT HOTLINE FOR MARCH 2020

The snow has melted and hopefully the end of winter is in site, Finally! Now is the time to get out and start pruning shade trees, fruit trees, perennials, and shrubs. Pick a sunny, dry day - it's best for the plants and the pruner!

It's a great time to prune shade trees. Some shade trees (such as Birch and Maple) are "bleeders". They secrete sap when pruned during their peak growth period: this is usually just as buds turn green. So prune sap-secreters first.

Evergreen shrubs and trees should be pruned after the coldest winter weather is past, but before warmer temperatures (above 50 F) send plants their "wake-up" call. Now is a good time to tip back new shoots on Mugho pines so they won't get leggy. It's also a good time to thin out branches on thick Colorado Spruce. Dense spruce are more vulnerable to wind damage. You can also shape junipers, arborvitae, and cedars by tipping back the tops and sides of these shrubs.

Pruning flowering shrubs is a little bit tricky. Prune spring-flowering shrubs AFTER they flower in the spring. If you prune spring-flowering shrubs now, you may sacrifice all or most of this spring's bloom. Spring-flowering shrubs include Forsythia, Lilac, and spring-blooming varieties of Spirea. Other flowering shrubs can be pruned now or, after buds have begun to swell, but *before* buds turn green. Cotoneaster, Caragana, Currants and Dogwood can be pruned now.

As the temperature warms, remove protective mulches from roses, perennials, strawberries, and rhododendrons crowns. Prune back as needed.

Now is a good time to shorten tall raspberry canes, or thin out crowded plants. You can remove the canes that fruited last summer on June-bearing raspberry cultivars. These canes are dead. Cut them as close to the ground as possible. If you have Everbearing raspberry cultivars (that produce fruit in the fall), remove *only the top part* of the canes; the part that fruited last fall.

Fruit trees can be pruned now until just as first green leaves emerge. When buds start to turn green, fruit tree bark is more prone to injury from ladder-attack or pruner-feet bruising. First, remove diseased or dead branches. However, research indicates that fruit trees with *canker disease* heal best when pruned *later in the spring*, when temperatures warm up. Like us, they heal better when growing actively.

**Where do you START PRUNING? Here are the five main pruning rules Roger Joy from Canyonview Nursery in Corvallis suggests:**

***FIRST, REMOVE ALL DEAD and DISEASED WOOD.***

***SECOND, REMOVE CROSSING OR RUBBING BRANCHES,***

***THIRD, REMOVE BRANCHES GROWING STRAIGHT UP OR TURNING INWARD TOWARD THE TREE.***

***FOURTH, REMOVE WEAK BRANCH CROTCHES; GOOD BRANCH ANGLES LOOK LIKE A CLOCK SET AT 10 OR 2 O'CLOCK.***

***FIFTH, ELEVATE LOWER BRANCHES to AVIOD LAWN-MOWER MAYHEM.***

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