

(On Course continued)

Last year we initiated the voluntary contribution program to allow the MAGCS to provide additional funding to organizations for turf research and for other worthy projects. The response was outstanding and affirmed our commitment to these organizations. Your continued support of this program will allow our contribution levels to match, and hopefully exceed, previous levels.

I look forward to a productive and progressive year for the MAGCS. We truly have an outstanding organization and the option will be available for you to take advantage of ample opportunities in 1996. I hope your choice will be to participate and surround yourself with these offerings.

Lastly, To you and your families; a very Merry Christmas & Happy New Year.

**Donald A. Cross, President, MAGCS**



## Prune Many Trees, Shrubs Now

by James A. Fizzell

Even in the coldest winter, there are some nice days, sunny and clear, when it is just good to get outdoors and enjoy the fresh air. Pruning small, deciduous trees and non-flowering shrubs might be just the excuse you need to get out of the office or shop.

Winter is a good time to prune these plants. Without leaves, the structure is easier to see, and often there is more free time than during the season when turf care is all-consuming.

Overgrown deciduous shrubs are ideally pruned at this time of year. While maintenance-trimming can be done during the season to remove small amounts of current growth, major pruning to renew a shrub or to reduce its size is best done in winter. If you have never done any pruning before or if you are afraid to make a mistake, don't worry. Plants do grow back. The important thing is get started. Here's how:

Some shrubs such as honeysuckle, privet, snowberry or potentilla can actually be cut to within a couple of inches of the ground. This is called rejuvenation, and is used to re-grow old, unsightly or overgrown plants. New growth from the base will result in an essentially new plant, full and green to the ground.

In the process, any overwintering scale insects, mites, and aphids are removed as well.

Plants will usually achieve their original size in a couple of seasons, and will be much more healthy and attractive.

Screens and hedges can be rejuvenated, but doing so eliminates them as effective barriers. By cutting one side to the ground, and waiting until it achieves enough height before cutting the other side, will rejuvenate the plants without losing their benefits in the process. Cut the back-side the first year. The damage to the front won't be so obvious if the remaining hedge is vigorous and attractive.

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(Prune Trees & Shrubs continued)

Renewal is a continuous process in which a quarter to a third of the oldest stems are removed to the ground each year. Arrowwood, weigelas, deutzia, dogwood, and overgrown lilacs respond well to this treatment. This opens the plant to light and air, and new stems are stimulated to grow from the base of the plant, completely renewing it every three to four years.

Stems left after renewal are sometimes too long and can be headed back to keep them in scale. In heading back, cut each overly-long stem back to a shoot growth in the same direction, but shorter. Try to find shoots growing away from the center of the plant.

It is important to try to maintain the natural form of the plant, not to create a sheared look. The correct tools to use are hand clippers, de-horning clippers, or hand saws for large limbs. Do not use hedge shears.

Small trees, including over-grown crabs or hawthorns can be pruned in winter as well. First remove any bottom suckers and any strongly vertical shoots growing through the center of the tree. These rarely bloom and will destroy the structure of the tree.

If the tree is grafted, be sure to remove any shoots growing from the root stock. (Try Finale in summer to burn them off as they arise).

Next, remove any dead or broken branches, and any limbs growing toward or through the center of the tree and those crossing other branches. These will eventually rub other limbs causing injuries to the bark and possibly opening them to infection by cankers.

Try to select and maintain several well spaced and healthy branches of the same size. These need to be rather horizontal for best flowering.

If the trees have been neglected over a number of years, don't try to make all the corrections at one time. Develop a plan for each tree and implement it over a couple of seasons.

Large trees are best trimmed in winter too, but this job is better left to a professional arborist. Plants of this size take special training and equipment, and large limbs are surprisingly heavy. Certified arborists have demonstrated that they have the skills to do this kind of work. Let them do it and avoid the risk of an unfortunate incident.

Pruning is an important part of the culture of ornamental plants if properly done. Don't try to over power your plants with pruning. Use judicious pruning to guide the natural growth of your plants. Good pruning is like a good haircut. The result is attractive, but you can't tell that it was done.

Enjoy your day in the fresh air. Do some pruning. Next summer when the results begin to show, maybe someone will notice how nice the plants look, but won't be able to tell why.



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