

Nature's News & Notes

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Happy Valentine's Day to you and your special someone.

In this issue we will discuss just what are Pruning Standards; the benefits and care of Home Orchards; the Plant of the Month-Roses of course; pond renovation along with our usual monthly tips and facts. We hope you enjoy and send any questions and feedback to [Ray Smith & Associates](#).

Home Orchards: Planting, Pruning & Training



Having your own orchard has become increasingly popular, whether it is two or three apple trees to 20 or more, along with peaches, plums and cherries. Apple trees are great because they are so versatile. They offer many varieties, shapes and sizes allowing them to be utilized in just about any garden situation, even a small patio area.

The annual training and pruning of fruit trees is often neglected. Without training and pruning, however, fruit trees will not develop proper shape and form. Prune fruit trees (and others in the Rose family), including flowering crabapples, callery (Bradford) pears, shads and hawthorns in winter. This allows for easy observation of the tree's structure and decreases chances for infection and spread of potentially devastating diseases.

Properly trained and pruned trees will yield high quality fruit much and live significantly longer. A primary objective of training and pruning is to develop a strong tree framework that will support fruit production & prevent serious limb breakage under a heavy fruit load. Another goal of annual training and pruning is to remove dead, diseased, or broken limbs. Proper pruning also opens up the tree canopy to maximize light penetration. Light penetration is essential for flower bud development and optimal fruit set, flavor, and quality. Although a mature tree may be growing in full sun, a very dense canopy may not allow enough light to reach 12 to 18 inches inside the canopy. Opening the tree canopy also permits adequate air movement through the tree, which promotes rapid drying to minimize disease infection. Additionally, a well shaped fruit tree is aesthetically pleasing. Pruning should begin late in the winter to avoid winter injury. Apple and pear trees should be pruned first, followed by cherry, peach, and plum trees.



Apples and pears are very tolerant of different pruning methods, and even do well being espaliered along a wall or fence. This gives you many options to choose a shape for your tree that best suits your tastes and needs. Whether you have existing trees or are interested in adding a tree with both ornamental & edible quantities; we have a Certified Arborist on our staff with over 15 years of working with both commercial & backyard orchards. We are the expert source for everything in fruit trees from planting, pruning, and fertility, to insect and disease control. With early Spring being planting time, contact us now to explore the options of this addition to your landscape. Picture being able to walk into your own landscape and picking a fresh piece of fruit from your very own trees.

Plant of the Month-Roses



If your loved ones are plant-lovers, consider buying them Rose bushes (something they can plant outside later) for Valentine's Day, rather than cut roses. Rose bushes are available at a local nursery or can be purchased by mail order; once Valentine's Day arrives, spring (and spring planting!) can't be far behind. Roses have had a prominent place in plant history from ancient times to the present. The rose flower is the one constant that has propelled the rose bush to one of the most popular plants in the world.

There are hundreds of varieties of roses in the United States today. With such a rainbow of choices, there's a perfect rose for every space in your garden. Roses are available with a tremendous assortment of growth habits, shapes and sizes, as well as many different leaf and flower colors,

Fact of the Month:

A new report shows how energy use can be reduced and cost savings achieved in cities by implementing shade tree planting programs. The study indicated that addition of 100,000 trees over a decade could reduce annual energy demands by about 14,000 megawatt-hours annually in Phoenix alone. Individual homeowners could see a reduction of 4.6% of their energy use, by having three mature shade trees sheltering the sun-struck sides of their house. The benefits to homeowners would be lower electric bills, cooler homes, increased property values, and more livable communities.

Garden Tips

MONTHLY CHECKLIST

What You Can Do:

- Consider making arrangements to have fruit bearing trees pruned before bud break.
- Continue to shake snow from low, unprotected shrubs. (i.e. evergreens & hedges).
- Plan for your Spring planting needs.
- Pay extra attention to the needs of winter birds. If you are feeding them, check feeders every few days and fill as

forms and textures. Some are shrubs, and grow low to the ground like a bush would while others are climbing, like a vine. The size of rose bushes will also vary depending on species. Some will grow low to the ground, like a ground cover, while others may grow higher, similar to a hedge. Rose bushes can come in nearly any color of the rainbow, with new shades appearing all the time. Few other shrubs or even perennial flowers bloom so readily the first year of planting or for so much of the growing season. And, roses come back year after year. Hybridization has created some wonderful colors and bush sizes that seem to be able to find a 'fit' in most any garden or landscape. Roses can be cultivated in small sizes such as 'shrub roses' or grown as 'climbing roses' that may stretch out vine like branches 15 feet long.

The types of roses available are:

Hybrid Tea

One of the most popular rose types, these are tall, long-stemmed roses ideal for cutting--the roses you usually see at the florist. The flowers are usually borne singly, one to a stem, rather than in clusters. In the garden they are often featured as single specimens or in a traditional rose cutting garden.

Floribunda

These bushy shrubs have the large, showy blossoms of the hybrid teas, but bloom more freely, setting clusters of three to fifteen blossoms rather than a single bloom on a stem. Floribundas are versatile; an individual shrub will fit easily into almost any sunny border planting. However, they are perhaps most striking in mass plantings.

Grandiflora

Grandiflora is a cross between a floribunda and a hybrid tea. Grandifloras are tall elegant plants which bloom repeatedly during the season, and generally feature classic hybrid tea flower clusters with stems which are slightly shorter than those of hybrid teas. This rose grows up to six feet tall.



Shrub & Landscape

IMAGINE THE PERFECT ROSE BUSH-GORGEOUS FLOWERS, NONSTOP BLOOM, AND lush, disease-free foliage. Wishful thinking? Happily not. These roses have changed the way many people view roses. Shrub roses, especially when compared with traditional varieties, are impressive for many reasons: their natural disease-resistance, their willingness to grow in a variety of climates with a minimum of attention from the gardener, their compact growth habit (very little pruning required), not to mention the great beauty of their flowers, which are borne consistently over a very long season. Ground cover types, which are also classed as shrub roses but are lower-growing, are best planted en masse. Because they bloom almost continuously, they make excellent partners for perennials and other shrubs in borders.

Climber

Climbing roses help dress up any garden. They produce long, arching canes with numerous flowers that can be trained to a trellis, fence, or other supporting structure. Grow them up and over an arching trellis to make a striking entryway; train them up a lattice to adorn a plain wall.

Miniature

Perfection on this scale can't fail to captivate! Miniature roses are the smallest of rose plants, growing anywhere from six inches to two feet tall. This rose type is hardy, flowers continuously and is perfect for container rose gardening, make lovely borders, and solve the space problem for those with a small yard or balcony. A miniature rose bush will provide novelty, versatility and ease of cultivation for any landscape. They can be masses as a ground cover, used as edgings and even potted and taken indoors.

Tree Roses

Tree roses are made up of a hardy root stock grafted to a long stem that is, in turn, grafted to a rose bush at the top of the stem. They are very elegant lining a walkway or as a feature amongst other plantings. The tree rose is a lovely addition to the garden, but extra rose care is needed to insure its survival over winter.

The colors, shapes and fragrance of rose flowers are simply stunning. Where would roses make the biggest impact? Take a look around your home for places where the beauty of roses could make a difference.

Planning Your Pond Renovation (or maybe for a new water feature)



Old Man Winter doesn't seem so old with his energetic flight across most of North America the past couple weeks! After you're done battering down the hatches to wait out his recent and seemingly unrelenting assault, turn your thoughts to brighter days and start thinking about what you might want to do to change and improve about your pond. And if

needed.

-This Valentine's Day forget the usual bouquet of roses, and give your spouse or special friend a gift that keeps on giving and order a rose bush that can be planted outside later.

What Our Professionals Should Do:

-Continue dormant pruning of ornamental and shade trees.

-Place orders for customer Spring planting needs.

-Prune fruit trees.

-Review your lawn for Spring repair, renovation, fertilizer and weed control programs.

Did you know that...Most storm damage to trees and shrubs occurs due to the heavy, wet snows in February and March.

you're still dreaming of your first pond, this too is a great time to plan for that!

Many people view ponds simply as an addition to your house - when you build it you are done. While that is true that a pond is indeed another room to your house, you're never really done with this addition! In reality, it's actually more like a living thing that is always evolving, so don't be afraid to add on and change it as often as you want! Whether you simply move a couple rocks, forcing the water to fall in a completely different direction, or maybe you'll go all out and add a 50-foot stream, a bog filter, or a Pondless® Waterfall in another part of your yard, the possibilities for growing your water feature are almost infinite.



We have seen it all - from do-it-yourself projects gone awry to ponds built by "jack-of-all-trades" types. We have yet to see one of these type ponds that could not be brought back to life. We have spoken with many people who currently own ponds, whether they built themselves or hired someone to do it. Unfortunately, many of the ponds were not built properly and are not functioning, balanced ecosystems. We have consulted with some homeowners on how to renovate their ponds properly, while others have chosen us to do the pond renovation project for them. In both cases, the feedback has been tremendous. Most homeowners tell us that they could not have imagined how we could convert their "pond nightmare" into something they had always wanted it to be in the first place. In almost every case, the homeowners had a 'bad taste in their mouth' about ponds, due to the fact that they spent their spare time performing maintenance on the pond, due to leaks and other nightmares, instead of enjoying their ponds. We are proud that we have been able to re-inspire them. Our Certified Aquascape Contractor has 20 years of experience in water garden construction and care.

Whether thinking about a renovation or maybe a new or additional water feature do it right now - when your thoughts ideas and mental plans for your dream garden and pond are still fresh in your mind - is the time to get them on paper. Dreaming is always the first step to planning. In your mind, what would be the perfect backyard paradise? Here are some questions to ask yourself as you search for your perfect pond; water feature (or makeover):

What do you enjoy most about water gardening? - the plants, fish, frogs, turtles, birds, or terrestrial landscaping? Build your dream pond with that as your emphasis.

What places have you visited that look and feel "perfect" to you? A stream in the mountains? A spring in the woods? Recreate aspects of these places on a smaller scale. A pondless waterfall or maybe some gurgling urns.

Where do you spend most of your time when you're at home? Will you spend more time outside or inside? Plan with that in mind.

What would make your yard a "paradise?"

Would you like to be able to swim with your fish in a natural swimming pond?

What do you like (or dislike) about your existing pond?

Do you like the tropics? Find some rare plants and bring them into your own backyard.

Hopefully you're well on your way to dreaming about creating or enhancing your own personal paradise. As you gaze out upon the wintry landscape, imagine what it can look like in the spring and go from there! The possibilities are limitless and you can always grow and expand with each addition you make. Now's the time to start your wheels turning. Spring will be back before you know it.

ASK THE EXPERT-What are Pruning Standards?

On our pruning proposals you may have noted the statement "All pruning adheres to ANSI A300-pruning standards". We have been asked, just what are these standards?

Prior to 1991, various industry associations and practitioners developed their own standards and recommendations for tree care practices. Recognizing the need for a standardized, scientific approach developed according to accepted principles; green industry associations, government agencies and tree care companies agreed to develop consensus for an official American National Standard.

This standard has been developed by the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA), and develops standards using procedures accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). ANSI A300 standards are voluntary industry consensus. ANSI A300 standards apply to professionals who provide for or supervise the management of trees, shrubs, and other woody landscape plants. The mission: To develop consensus performance standards based on current research and sound practice to manage trees, shrubs, and other woody plants.



These standards are not mandatory however, so make sure that any pruning done on your trees is performed by a company with Certified Arborists and that adheres to these standards. Ray Smith & Associates not only has six Certified Arborists on staff, but is a [TCIA Accredited Tree Care Company](#) and as part of this we must adhere to the standards. TCIA Accreditation is a consumer confidence program administered by America's oldest and most respected tree care trade association. The TCIA Accreditation program is built on the threefold foundation of ethics, quality, and consumer confidence. The TCIA Accreditation program is a voluntary program that credentials companies which meet stringent criteria for professionalism, employee training, state and federal safety regulations, business ethics and customer satisfaction. Under the process, businesses undergo an extensive review and a comprehensive audit of professional and business practices aimed at safeguarding consumers. TCIA Accredited companies must provide consumers estimates written to the American National Standards and adhere to them. Currently, there are less than 15 companies in NY State and 300 companies nationwide that have obtained this accreditation.

[E-Mail with your Questions.](#)

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