

Tree Talk

Time to Prune

Now is an excellent time to be pruning your trees and shrubs. Pruning should ideally be started in early March and continue through mid April or until the tree and shrub buds start to expand and break open. To promote a more rapid recovery from pruning branches, always make a clean cut along the outer edge of the branch collar. Making flush cuts or leaving a stub will encourage the entry of decay and disease into the tree, which can potentially



create a hazardous problem in the future. Tree pruning is usually done for several different reasons: improving structural integrity; removing broken/dead branches; and removing lower branches for ground clearance. Topping trees is highly discouraged and will lead to poor branching habits and loss of structural integrity. Many states have anti-tree topping campaigns in place to try and curtail this destructive procedure.

Now is an ideal time to renewal prune your summer flowering shrubs. If the plant is overgrown, but healthy, you can prune it down to within 3 inches of the ground. This will help establish thicker foliage with more flowering; though will leave your plant shorter by mid summer. Summer-flowering shrubs produce their flower buds on the same years growth, so early spring pruning does not prevent them from flowering that same year. Spring-flowering shrubs, such as lilacs, form their flower buds on the previous years growth, so pruning those now, will prevent them from flowering later this spring. Spring-flowering shrubs should be pruned shortly after flowering is done.

*Aaron Kiesz is the
Urban Forestry Specialist
For the S.D. Div. of Resource
Conservation and Forestry,
523 E. Capitol
Pierre, SD 57501 or
Phone at (605) 773-3594 or 1-800-228-5254 (SD Only)*