

Yavapai Gardens

January 2000

Master Gardener Newsletter



Oh No, Another Pruning Article!

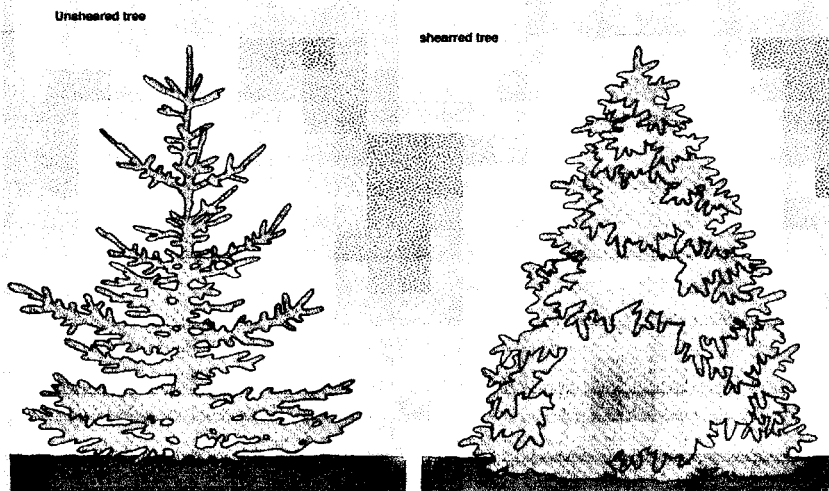
A pruning article shows up in the newsletter, therefore it must be January, right? Weary of being told how to prune your trees or how not to, making you feel guilty that you may have done it wrong? Relax, plants are amazingly resilient things and can recover a season's bad pruning. There is always next year to correct any errors in judgement. But it isn't fruit trees or even ornamental deciduous trees I want to talk about this year, except to say, if you are not sure how to prune, attend one of the pruning workshops Cooperative Extension holds each year. This year I am going to talk about the little discussed subject of evergreen pruning. Most of us don't even think of pruning evergreens but they can be pruned to improve their shape or get them under control. I'm sure most of you have seen that pretty "little" evergreen planted right next to the house grow up to be a monster that consumes the place. If you have a young example of that, it can be pruned to keep it under control. Personally, I'd just dig it out as soon as

possible before it damages the foundation. If you can't bring yourself to do that, read on—

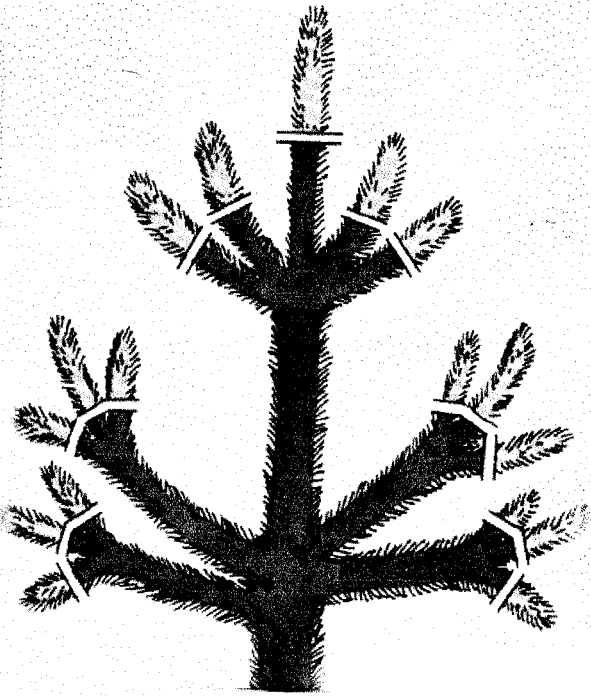
This is not going to be complete instructions on how to prune evergreens, just some ideas on the timing and basic technique. Oh, one other thing—don't prune your evergreens now—you can wait till spring.

First, a quick primer on how evergreens grow. The growing season of most pines is after the last frost and the ground begins to warm. Ar-

borvitae, cypress and juniper start a little later. New growth starts from buds that were formed last year. Generally, the tree produces thousands of buds that do not grow and pruning allows some of these inactive buds to grow, creating a bushier tree.



Shearing—this is actually a technique used in the summer months when new growth is developing. This technique is used with Christmas trees to create the full thick effect. (A scotch pine Christmas



tree is a heavily sheared tree, if you are interested in seeing what a sheared tree can look like.)

To shear is to just cut off the ends of the branches—give it a haircut more or less—a little off the top please! In the summer the new growth, called candles, begins to show. If you want the tree to grow, wait until the candles are two to four inches long and then pinch or clip off the very tips. If you want to keep the tree the same size, clip the candles when they are only an inch long. This is a tedious job on a large tree; electric trimmers can make for a faster job, but just don't cut off too much. It is important to do this from the first year the tree is planted. This technique will not do much for shaping a large already formed tree. It is possible to dwarf evergreens by shearing but it is better to purchase dwarf varieties to begin with. Keeping a plant dwarfed that doesn't grow that way naturally can be a tedious job.

Evergreens like spruce have branches all the way to the ground. Some people like to prune these branches to expose the trunk. Just remember once they are cut off they will not grow back if you find you don't like the effect. If you plan on pruning them, do it in late summer or fall. Sum-

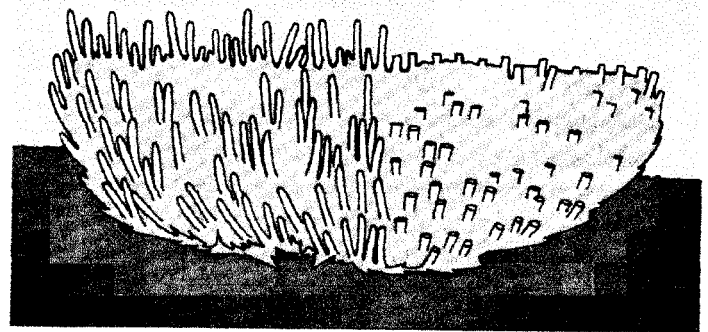
mer pruning is not recommended, as the tree may bleed heavily. Winter makes the branches brittle and the wood may break in places you didn't intend.

While this may be difficult in our area, it is recommended to shear narrow leafed evergreens while wet. This helps prevent discoloration of the sheared ends. Don't worry, even if sheared in dry weather, the discoloration will disappear soon.

If you don't care for the sheared look, the wonderful thing about pine and cypress trees is they don't need much pruning care. Just remove branches that may be crossing or those that are inconveniently in a path.

When pruning a cypress or arborvitae, don't just whack off the offending limb. It makes for an ugly stump. Reach in and find a place where a smaller branch will make the cut less obvious. It's a bit more labor intensive and scratchy, but the tree won't have a "butchered" look. These trees should be pruned in the winter when they are dormant.

One of the most important things to remember about pruning evergreens is not to plant them too close to the house where pruning becomes necessary. (I have a neighbor who has to periodically butcher his evergreen to keep it from taking over the house; it's really ugly!) Remember, that cute little evergreen gets bigger and, if you give it enough room, it rarely needs pruning. That's something I like, plants that don't take much care.



Shearing dwarf pine

Plant Basics: Bare Roots

by Cheri Melton,
Cochise County Master Gardener Newsletter,
High on the Desert

This month marks the arrival of bare-root plants. Many plants are available to include fruit and shade trees, roses, grapes, and cane fruits.

Why buy bare-root? One reason is that it is most effective. Savings can be up to 70% buying

stimulator to the water) before planting. A bucket, garbage can or a bathtub will work.

Dig the hole large enough to accommodate the roots. Trim any broken roots and place the plant into the hole, ensuring that, if it is a grafted plant, the graft bud sits above the soil level. Back-fill with soil, make a ridge of soil around the hole to form a watering basin and apply water. Some literature says to prune/thin the tree branches back by one-third to compensate for the root mass being small; some instruct not to prune/thin at all. I have done both and have seen no difference. After the first watering, check the soil every few days with a soil probe and water when the top three inches are dry.

Bare-root plants are dormant and do not require lots of water, as this could promote the roots to rot. Pick up the watering when the weather becomes warm and the plants start to leaf out. And be patient—some bare-root plants are slow to leaf out. The wait will be worth it—Enjoy!



bare-root over container plants. Another is the ease of planting. The hole can be backfilled with soil that is dug out and the roots will grow in one soil structure instead of container soil that is light and airy unlike the native soils the roots will eventually encounter, which are usually tight and clayey. Water penetration will be more uniform, watering one soil structure rather than two or more compositions.

When you buy bare-root, the nursery will have the plants "heeled" in some type of loose, moist materials such as sand or sawdust. Check the roots—they should be fresh and plump. Have the roots bagged or wrapped for the trip home.

If you are not going to plant for at least three days, plants should be placed in moist sand/sawdust. If planting within three days, it is a good idea to soak the roots in water (you can add a root



The Victorian Garden Catalogue

Daniels Bros. Spring 1876



January

Little can be done among Flowers in the open air during January, unless the weather be exceptionally open and mild, in that case Autumn-sown annuals must be attended to, relieved of dead rubbish that may have fallen or been blown on their tops. Those that are too thick might likewise be thinned and the thinnings replanted elsewhere if room can be found. It frequently happens that the thinnings stand through the Winter best and flower first. The check to growth, insofar as it limits the flow of sap, strengthens the power of resisting cold. Should the ground and the weather prove sufficiently dry, run a hoe through all early Annuals and Spring flowers and break the crust over the crowns of bulbs before they get to the surface. See that mice or rats do not visit Crocuses or Tulips, and feast on their undeveloped beauty underground. Favorite beds of Tulips and Hyacinths should be thatched or hooped over, should severe weather set in. After a frost, many plants are in more danger of perishing than while it lasts; the expansion of the soil in freezing upheaves young plants of Annuals—Pinks, Polyanthuses, Cloves, Pansies. When the ground thaws the plants are left lying almost on the surface; therefore after each frost examine all choice plants and replace them by a firm pressure of finger and thumb. The monster who takes his heel to them is not worthy to be satisfied by their fragrance nor cheered by their beauty. Possibly the weather will check all this and, in fact all operations, by binding the soil hard in the iron fetters of frost. Even then, however, much work may be done, if not among the flowers, the garden and beds may need draining or enriching and this is the season to do the one and prepare material for the other; no flowers, tender or hardy, will continue to thrive on saturated soil. Thorough drainage is even more essential in Floriculture than in Horti or Agriculture. And then, as to Manure, flowers can neither paint their beauty nor elaborate their fragrance on dead rocks or barren soil. To prevent disappointment, begin the year by enriching the earth for a crop of flowers, much as you would for a crop of rich fruits, as Strawberries; and vegetables, as Cauliflowers. The manures should be more decomposed, that is all. During frosty weather get manures or composts ready, unless both were applied in the Autumn, at which season all flower beds and borders should have been dressed and dug.

Ground-work may also be pushed forward in open weather and alterations of walks, flower beds, lawns, &c., carried on. Ground may also be leveled and turf relaid or renewed; the best turf for the purpose is that found on a common or by the road side. Mark the turves out a yard long and a foot wide, then run the long spade under them, an inch from the surface, and roll up firmly. These rolled turves are easily conveyed from place to place, and run out on the new lawn, which should first be made firm and even.

Under glass, shelter Auriculas, Carnations, Pinks, Pansies, Polyanthus, and protect seedling Pelargoniums, Verbenas, &c., from frost. Also Double Stocks, Wallflowers, choice Sweet Williams, *Humea elegans*, Fuschias, &c., for planting out in Spring and Summer, protect from severe cold. Seedling Hollyhocks in pots and pans pick over and syringe with Gishurst's compost as an antidote to disease.

Roots of Marvel of Peru, Dahlias, *Salvia Patens*, old Pelargoniums, protect from frosts. Calceolarias, Pinks and seedlings, pot off small plants; attend to cuttings.

Roses may still be planted in open weather, mulching over the surface to prevent the frost reaching the roots. Sow Sweet Peas of all sorts if not done in November; they are perfectly hardy.



Desert Zinnia

Zinnia grandiflora

I'm sure all of you are familiar with the bright colorful zinnias found in many summer gardens but did you know about the native zinnia? The Desert Zinnia is a low-growing perennial found throughout much of New Mexico, Texas, Arizona and northern Mexico. Its bright yellow blooms are a nice addition to any native or xeriscape landscape.

This is a small plant—growing to only about eight inches high. The branching stems have narrow, small, three-ribbed leaves on them. Desert Zinnias spread by underground rhizomes that move deeply into the soil, making them very drought tolerant. They can get by on less than eight inches a year.

Zinnias are hardy plants and as native they are found in a variety of locations, elevations and habitats. Their range runs from 4000 to 6500 feet in elevation, anywhere from dry plains areas to desert grasslands and oak woodlands.

The yellow flowers have an orange center and bloom from May to September, making them a bright highlight throughout the summer. Flowers are 3/4 inches across. They dry well, the petals becoming papery and straw-colored. If you are looking to attract pollinators, this plant will help you. Its yellow flowers are favorites of honeybees, much like the more common garden varieties.

In your garden use this plant as a ground cover in dryer, warmer areas. Once established, it should be able to do without supplemental water.

Finding plants may be difficult (check with specialist nurseries that handle native plants) but seeds are available from a variety of sources. Germination of the seeds is erratic and may take several weeks. Sow in early spring; they prefer warmer weather. Do not use a sprinkler or water the leaves; always keep the foliage dry. They are susceptible to mildew. Plant in full sun and water

the first year to get them established. The next season you can start to taper off until they rely on nothing but rainfall. However, if you want to extend the blooming period, supplemental water will help. The plant goes dormant in the winter. Once the plant is dormant, cut back to the basal growth. New plants will regrow from the rhizomes in the spring.



Ed Note: The modern zinnia is originally native to Mexico and is closely related to the Desert Zinnia. Zinnias were named after Johann Zinn, an explorer who led botanical expeditions into Mexico in the early 1700's.

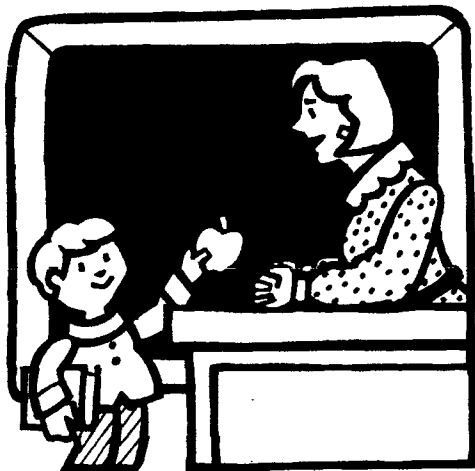
2000 Master Gardener Class

The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension invites you to attend Master Gardener training in Cottonwood February 2 through April 26, 2000. Classes will be held every Wednesday from 9:00 am until 12:00 noon at the Professional and Amateur Art Building at the Verde Valley County Fairgrounds. To Qualify for the training, applicants must:

- submit an application to the Yavapai County Cooperative Extension Prescott Office by January 15, 2000.
- attend 13, three hour classes taught by University of Arizona Faculty and Specialists and pass the final exam with a score of 70% or higher.
- be willing to volunteer 50 hours for the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension providing gardening/landscaping assistance in local communities.

Class size is limited; the first 30 qualified applicants will be accepted into the program (a minimum of one year residency in Yavapai County is recommended). There is a \$80.00 fee per trainee to cover the cost of materials. The fee is collected on or before the first day of classes. If you have further questions, please call me at (520)445-6590.

Jeff Schalaus



January Calendar

Start seeds from perennials now in a coldframe or greenhouse.

Look after Christmas plants; fertilize and give them plenty of light. Put your living Christmas tree outside. Keep it shaded from midday and afternoon sun for a couple of weeks. After that you can move it out to full sun.

Don't forget to keep trees and shrubs watered.

Fertilize asparagus. A thick layer of compost or manure and a complete fertilizer is all you need.

Apply dormant oil to trees if you have had pest problems.

Get holes dug for any new bare root stock you plan on putting in this winter.



Yavapai Rose Society, January 17, 2:00 pm, at the First Christian Church, 1230 Willow Creek Road, Prescott. The program will be a discussion of "What We Did Wrong With Our Roses this Past Year." The discussion will be led by ARS Consulting Rosarians. There will be a consulting Rosarian Question and Answer period. Guests are welcome and there is no charge. For more information call Bob or Nancy at 771-9300.

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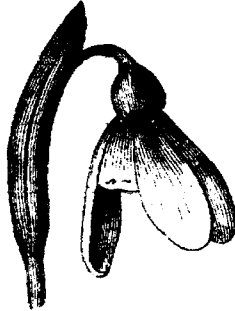
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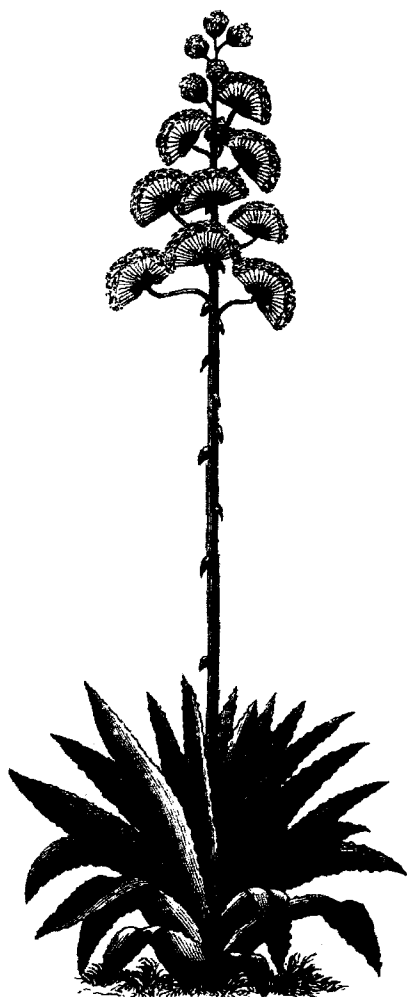
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Master Gardener Opportunities

I've had a request for a seed/plant exchange. I've always been willing to publish anyone's requests for seeds or plants or information from those looking to give something away. In fact I have given away some of my extra plant material through the years by making offerings in this newsletter. So this is a reminder, if any of you have plants, seeds, bulbs etc. you would like to get rid of, or you are trying to find something, let me know. You can phone, mail or email me with your request. Nora Graf, P.O. Box 3652, Camp Verde, AZ 86322, (520)567-6703, or email at mesquite2@hotmail.com

John Osborne of Sedona is seeking Master Gardener assistance in management of the experimental apple orchard at Slide Rock State Park. Come to a beautiful place and help John tend the apples. His phone number is (520)282-9323.

If you are interested in Organic Gardening, join the Cottonwood Organic Gardening Club. They meet at the Cottonwood-Verde Valley Fairgrounds on the second Wednesday of each month at 1:30 p.m.

Yavapai Master Gardener Volunteer Opportunities

The following lists are designed to give you some ideas of potential Master Gardener volunteer projects. Don't limit yourself to these ideas. This list is simply a starting place. Use your imagination. As an Associate Master Gardener, you are helping the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension to deliver the latest research-based horticultural information to the residents of Yavapai County. Please call Jeff Schalau at the Prescott Cooperative Extension office before starting on one of these opportunities.

West Yavapai Area Opportunities

Answering service calls and offering assistance at the Prescott Cooperative Extension office.
Volunteering in area schools to educate youth about horticulture.

Gardening and watering at the Sharlot Hall Museum - Contact Steve Whitley(445-3122 ext. 21)
Gardening and watering at the Prescott Pioneer Home - Contact Louise Klein (778-6292)

Verde Valley Area Opportunities

Answering service calls and offering assistance at the Cottonwood Cooperative Extension office.
Volunteering in area schools to educate youth about horticulture.

Camp Verde Elementary School Garden - Contact pending.

Daniel Bright Elementary - have had projects in the past.

Cottonwood Senior Citizens' Center Vegetable Garden

Slide Rock State Park Apple Orchard - Contact John Osborne (282-9323)

Dead Horse Ranch State Park

Fort Verde State Park

Other Ideas for Projects

Beautification Projects

Creating Displays

Keep Prescott Beautiful

Plant Collecting

Pruning Workshops

Highlands Center for Natural History

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

February 17 & 18, 2000, The High Desert Gardening Conference, Sierra Vista, AZ, Lakeside Activity Center, Fort Huachuca.

Southwest Tree Seedling Program is another place to pick up drought-tolerant and Native plants. It is a cheap way to pick up large quantities of plants. They are small (seedlings) but the price is right. You also have to buy large quantities. You can pick up an order form and list of available plants at Fort Verde State Park in Camp Verde or call 1-800-426-0958 to get an application, or check out their website: Greenwoodnursery.com Click on the Southwest plants page; your order can also be placed on the web.

Third Annual Southwest Region Community & School/Youth Gardening Conference, February 25-27, Phoenix. Contact Cheryl Czaplicki (602)942-3289, or email:

j-c-zaplicki@worldnet.att.net

You can also check it out on the internet at:
<http://ag.arizona.edu/maricopa/garden/html/calendar/aware.htm>

The "Arizona Master Gardener Manual" is now on-line. Check out
<http://ag.arizona.edu/pubs/garden/mg/>

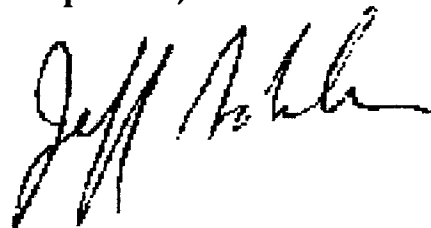
NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

Let me know about your garden, the types of seeds you planted, interesting articles you found-anything of gardening interest. Send to:

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