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## *News from Your Extension Agent:*

February marks the beginning of spring garden prep

### Pruning

Don't commit crape murder! You have probably heard this term and laughed. The fact is, crape myrtles don't always require pruning! They get their beauty from years of growth and maturity. If the new growth is cut back every year, each new season will bring young, weak branches that often break in storms. Plants should only be trimmed for aesthetic purposes: blocking a power line, window, overhanging street or when a branch is already damaged or growing into another branch. Limbs should be removed at the base where it emerges from another limb and do not leave any "nubs" or portions of branches (this is the case for pruning of ALL plants). It is also appropriate to prune suckers that emerge from the base of the tree and old seed heads.

Fruit trees should be pruned more heavily. Fruit trees need to have limbs sturdy enough to hold the fruit it will bear. There should also be room within the tree for the fruit to grow. Peach trees are probably the most heavily pruned of all the fruit trees. Peach trees need an open center for sunlight to reach every limb. Dead, diseased or damaged limbs should be the first that are removed. Then look at crowding, shading and aesthetics of the tree and individual limbs. It is also important not to let peach trees get too tall! How would we harvest the peaches if we cannot reach them? Apple and pear trees are similar, but it is less important to worry about crowding and having an open center in those trees.

Roses for Valentine's day! February 14<sup>th</sup> is a good reminder of when it is time to prune rose bushes. We want to wait until after the coldest weather to begin pruning these plants. The dormant and old growth on plants actually help protect the plant from the bitter winter weather. For hybrid tea roses, prune top growth 18-24 inches above ground, retaining several healthy canes. The older the plant, the more canes you should leave. Make clean, sharp cuts just above buds which point outward (clean, sharp cuts should be made for pruned limbs on ALL plants). Antique roses will not need drastic pruning but can be shaped to make room for new growth.

All data and recommendations are based on Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Resources and other Extension Resources. Next week I will continue this discussion with common February planting, lawncare and practices for livestock owners during this time of year.

Sincerely,

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