

Landscape in Need of Pruning?

by Paul Winski, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture

We're finally starting to feel some cooler weather, lower humidity and the daylength is getting shorter. As you look around your garden there may be a few shrubs and trees that need some pruning. The fall and winter are ideal times to prune since these plants will be under less environmental stress.

Q. Why should I prune?

A. The 3 top reasons for pruning are safety, health, and aesthetics.

Safety: remove branches that are potential hazards such as limbs leaning on a roof, or branches hanging over a driveway where cars are parked. Tree branches growing into powerlines should be handled by a certified arborist.

Health: dead or dying branches should be removed along with branches that are crossing and rubbing together or any branch stubs.

Aesthetics: pruning helps encourage flower and fruit production. The practice also encourages and maintains the desired plant form.



Home Grown Lecture Series: Holiday Meats-Not Just Turkey!

November 3, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.
[Register Here](#)

Plantable Christmas Tree Alternatives

December 1, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.
[Register Here](#)

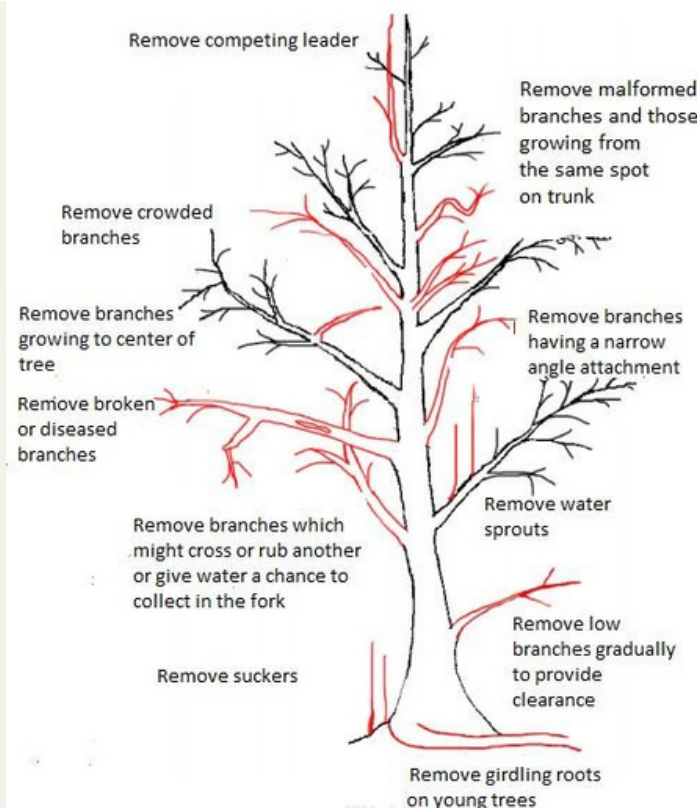
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Q. How do I identify branches that need to be pruned?

A. The following types of branches should be removed to promote a healthy tree.

- Remove dead, broken or diseased branches. These can be potential hazards and can provide entry points for pests and disease.
- Remove downward growing branches. They are potential hazards and negatively affect the appearance of the tree.
- Any branches that cross, are entangled or are competing should be removed.
- Suckers emerging from the base of the tree should be removed.
- Water sprouts which are vigorously growing vertical branches should be removed.



Q. What type of tools do I need?

A. My three go-to tools are a hand pruner, lopping shear and a hand saw. A good hand pruner will cut branches up to $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Lopping shears are handy for limbs up to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter. A hand saw is also helpful for branches that may be over 1" in diameter. Other items that are also helpful would be a chainsaw, a pole pruner and hedge shears. Pruning is a necessary practice that all plants and trees will need at some time. It is an art but there is also science behind making proper cuts and when shrubs and trees should be pruned. If you need more information, here are some additional resources.



Proper Pruning in the Landscape (Home Grown Recording):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWakNBRR1dU&t=196s>

Trees Are Good: <https://www.treesaregood.org/>

Pruning Trees:

D:\spfo\web\pubs\howtos\ht_prune\ht_prune.PDF (agrillife.org)

What to Plant This Month

by Brandi Keller, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture

Texas Arbor Day Nov 4th 2022



Why a Different Arbor Day?

National Arbor Day is celebrated in April each year, but this is ideal planting for the north. Texas Arbor Day is situated during a time when digits are lower, drought is reduced, and roots on newly planted trees can flourish.

November is a great time to establish new trees.

Small Trees (25' or less)

Yaupon holly
Texas olive (*Cordia boissieri*)
Magnolia sweetbay

Medium Trees (25 - 45')

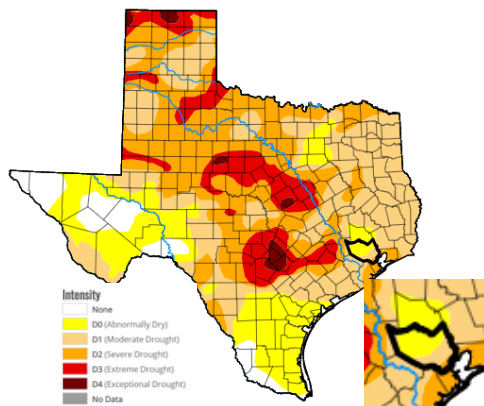
Fringe tree
Mexican plum
Redbud

Large Trees (45' or more)

Drummond red maple
White oak
Red oak

Tips When Planting Trees

- Check for and avoid overgrown roots when purchasing. When planting, tease roots with fingers, or cut down sides and tease out so roots reach outward.
- Loosen soil a few feet around the hole.
- Use the same soil from the hole. Do not amend with compost, potting soil, or peat moss.
- Create bed that supports tree for a few years, 5-6 feet in diameter.
- Plant tree no deeper than it was in the pot with the root flare visible above soil and mulch.
- Autumn water recommendation: Water 2x/week for the first few weeks if we have average weather, but account for rain. Reduce watering to once a week, then water only when needed. Click [HERE](#) for more info on planting trees.



Hopefully conditions will improve this month, but as of 10/27, 100% of Harris County is in some stage of drought and has been for last 21 weeks (with the exception of only 4 weeks.) This means that it's important to provide your established trees supplemental water. Drought stress is apparent around town from browning to early color change. If planting new trees, account for rain or lack of.

- [Visit the Texas Drought Monitor here.](#)

To watch for "[All About Mint](#)," Click [HERE](#).

4 Soil Health Management Practices

Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, Ag & Natural Resources

Just like the human body needs health to live and prosper for a long life, as a farmer or producer, you should also be concerned about your number one priority, your soil's health! For many decades, the study of soil health emphasized soil's physical and chemical properties. Today, soil scientists strive to include biological aspects as well, since many of the processes that influence soil occur because of living organisms.

Today, I would like to share with you four basic strategies to help improve the health of your soil. These are based on four basic principles outlined by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and include: 1) Minimizing soil disturbance, 2) Keeping soil covered 3) Maximizing plant diversity and 4) Maximizing the period of living root growth.

Are you asking what makes up a healthy soil? Well, the first thing you should become familiar with is the term soil aggregates. Aggregates are groups of soil particles that bind to each other more strongly than to other particles. They form pores that help retain water and air. Well structured soil allows for adequate aeration, water infiltration, and root penetration and growth. We often think of aggregates just as a physical property, but biological organisms influence this structure. Earthworms, mycorrhizal fungi, plant roots and organic matter all influence the ways soil forms aggregates.

So, about those four strategies. Keep in mind that this is not an all-inclusive list, rather, these strategies provide a good base to improving your overall soil health. Many of these strategies mentioned here are connected and work together towards the goal of better soil health.

- **Practice No-Tillage:** reducing tillage to either no-till or strip-till minimizes disruptions to soil aggregates by not breaking them up continuously and forcing the systems to restart. Minimal tillage maintains natural aggregates, one of the key components of soil health, and helps prevent loose soil particles from washing or blowing away easily (water and wind erosion).



- **Add more crops to your rotation:** Continuous rotations of the same crop dominate landscapes across the U S agriculture landscape. In the short-term, these systems yield in abundance and provide good economic returns. However, a strong strategy for long-term resiliency includes increasing plant diversity in your system. Diversification strategies include enhancing crop genetic diversity, mixed plantings, and rotating crops.

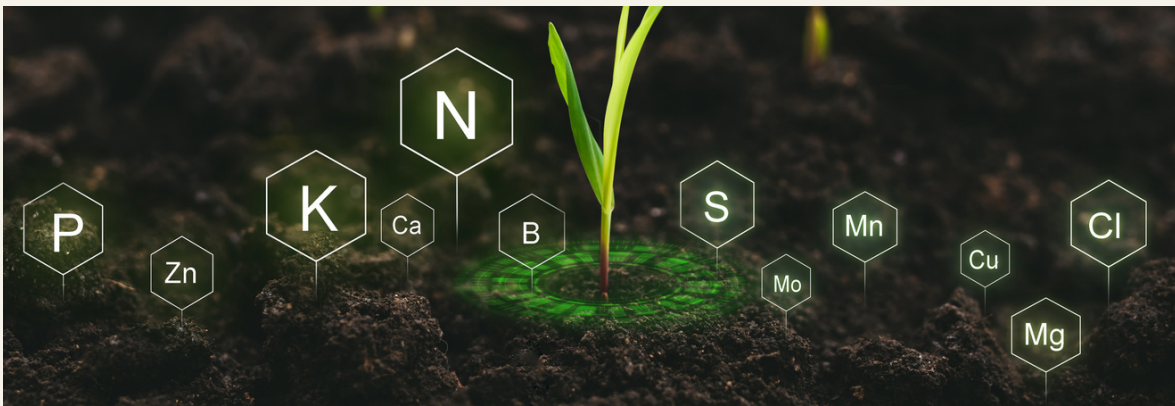
4 Soil Health Management Practices

Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, Ag & Natural Resources

- **Include cover crops:** Cover crop roots improve soil aggregation and reduce erosion. They also reduce the impact of raindrops on the soil surface and serve as a habitat and food source for microbes. As organisms decompose, the residue, nutrients are released back into the soil. Combining no-till and cover crops is a great way to keep your soil covered, minimizing disturbance, maximizing living root growth, and maximizing plant diversity!
- **Managing nutrients:** this practice goes hand in hand with the previous strategies I have mentioned. Worth to mention, you may need to adjust your fertilizer applications after switching to a reduced tillage system, adding a cash crop, or implementing cover crops into your rotation. As organic matter increases, you may see an increase in your soils ability to hold onto nutrients longer (making it easier on the checkbook with the cost of fertilize these days!) If you work with your county agent for soil testing, make sure you include him in your soil health plan so they can give you recommendations to fit your specific goals. Whenever you apply nutrients to adjust your soil needs, regardless of if you use any of the other strategies listed above, it is important to keep the 4R principles of nutrient stewardship in mind:

1. Right Source 2. Right Rate 3. Right Time 4. Right Place

A common practice to test for soil fertility every two years is highly recommended. This is an easy way to take preventative measures against over or under applying nutrients necessary for a successful cash crop!



Additional resources on this topic can be found:

http://publications.tamu.edu/SOIL_CONSERVATION_NUTRIENTS/SCS-2020-08-soil-is-central.pdf

http://publications.tamu.edu/SOIL_CONSERVATION_NUTRIENTS/PUB_soil_Managing%20Crop%20Nutrients%20Through%20Soil%20Manure%20and%20Effluent%20Testing.pdf

http://publications.tamu.edu/SOIL_CONSERVATION_NUTRIENTS/E-59.pdf

The Home Grown Podcast!

The Home Grown podcast is presented by the Agriculture & Natural Resources (ANR) Unit of the Harris County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office. The series provides information on urban agriculture / horticulture / gardening and ag literacy. Check out our latest episodes below.

Episode #17

In this episode, Brandi interviews Jaime Gonzalez, Houston Healthy Cities Program Director for The Nature Conservancy. Jaime talks about his history with various organizations and how they all blend to create a rich story of experiences that can be shared with diverse communities on nature, health, and Houston.

Episode #16

Paul talks with Becky Bowling and her position as an urban water specialist in Texas. They'll discuss how education is evolving to better prepare city & county governments, the green industry and homeowners for developing sustainable landscapes.

Episode #15

Brandi interviews Bryan Kratish, Manager of Outreach Services with the Harris County Public Library System. They discuss the partnership with the Master Gardener Green Thumb Gardening Series and the library system's creative programming to reach more county residents.

Episode #14

On this episode, Paul talks with Lauren Kirchner, the director of sales & marketing at Spring Creek Growers in Waller, Texas. Paul & Lauren talk about her family's greenhouse operation and the current trends that she is seeing in the industry.

Episode #13

Shannon interviews Mr. Steven Sisler, DAR (Disaster and Recovery) Agent with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Harris County. Mr. Sisler shares important and timely information about emergency preparedness and information for the 2022 Hurricane Season.

How do you access the podcast?

Click on the image below or go to <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1791415>. You can also search "Home Grown" wherever you find your podcasts.



Harris County
Extension Agents
Horticulture
Paul Winski
Brandi Keller
Ag/Natural Resources
Shannon Dietz

2022 HOME GROWN LECTURE SERIES

Lectures will be on the first Thursday of each month and include live demonstrations. Register now so you don't miss one!

Winter

STARTING PLANTS FROM SEEDS

Paul Winski - Texas A&M AgriLife Harris County Extension Agent-Horticulture

January 6, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

BASIC GRAFTING TECHNIQUES

Shannon Dietz - Texas A&M AgriLife Harris County Extension Agent-Agriculture and Natural Resources

February 3, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

TOMATOES FOR THE PATIO

Brandi Keller - Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Horticulture

March 3, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

Summer

IDENTIFYING PEST & DISEASE ISSUES IN THE GARDEN

Paul Winski - Texas A&M AgriLife Harris County Extension Agent-Horticulture

July 7, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

SAFETY IN THE HOME GARDEN

Shannon Dietz - Texas A&M AgriLife Harris County Extension Agent-Agriculture and Natural Resources

August 4, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

ALL ABOUT MINT

Brandi Keller - Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Horticulture

September 1, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

Spring

STARTING PLANTS FROM CUTTINGS

Paul Winski - Texas A&M AgriLife Harris County Extension Agent-Horticulture

April 7, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

HOME BUTCHER: MAKING BOUDIN

Shannon Dietz - Texas A&M AgriLife Harris County Extension Agent-Agriculture and Natural Resources

May 5, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

10 REASONS FOR YELLOWING LEAVES

Brandi Keller - Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Horticulture

June 2, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

Fall

PROPER PRUNING IN THE LANDSCAPE

Paul Winski - Texas A&M AgriLife Harris County Extension Agent-Horticulture

October 6, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

HOLIDAY MEATS - NOT JUST TURKEY!

Shannon Dietz - Texas A&M AgriLife Harris County Extension Agent-Agriculture and Natural Resources

November 3, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

PLANTABLE CHRISTMAS TREE ALTERNATIVES

Brandi Keller - Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Horticulture

December 1, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.

Registration

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

homegrown2022.eventbrite.com



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Social Media/Websites

[Harris County Horticulture Facebook](#)

[Horticulture YouTube Channel](#)

[Harris County Master Gardeners Facebook](#)

[Harris County Ag & Natural Resources Facebook](#)

[Harris County AgriLife Website](#)

If you would like to **unsubscribe** from the Home Grown newsletter, please email Susan Hubert at susan.hubert@ag.tamu.edu



The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife. Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service, or accommodation in order to participate in this meeting are encouraged to contact the County Extension Office prior to the meeting to determine how reasonable accommodations can be made.