

Highlights in

Horticulture

Baker County

Dear Extension Friends,

January 2009

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With the start of the new year, I hope some of you made new year's resolutions to get outside and do some more gardening. Hopefully the cold weather won't deter you from planting a tree for Arbor Day on January 16th (see article on page 3). The extension office has a lot of good programs scheduled for this year and we would love for you to join us. Also, if you have any horticulture topic suggestions for programs or articles, I would enjoy hearing from you.

Best Regards,

Alicia

Alicia R. Lamborn
Horticulture Extension Agent
Baker County Extension Service

Upcoming Programs & Events: January

January 14 (and 15th if necessary) — **2009 Florida Certified Pile Burner Courses** Duval County Extension Office, Jacksonville, FL. Learn how to burn piles legally, safely, and efficiently. Attendance is limited and the cost of course is \$50 per person for course materials, test, and lunch. See http://www.fl-dof.com/calendar/cal_pdf/pile_burner_jax_Jan14_2009.pdf for details and registration form.

January 16th — **Florida's Arbor Day** Celebrate Florida's Arbor Day by planting a tree for all to enjoy! (See article on page 3.)

January 22nd — **Caring For Crape Myrtles** 6pm to 7:30pm at the Baker County Extension Office (Agriculture Center). This class was designed to teach homeowners and landscape maintenance professionals about caring for crape myrtles in Florida. Topics will include information on cultivars, landscape uses, pests, and maintenance, with a focus on proper pruning practices. Program is free; RSVP at 904-259-3520 or email alamborn@ufl.edu by Tuesday, January 20th at 5pm.

January 29th — **Introduction to Pruning: Trees and Shrubs** 6pm to 8pm at the Baker County Extension Office (Agriculture Center). This class will cover topics relating to tree structure, structural pruning of young and mature trees, pruning cuts, developing special forms on young plants, and shrub pruning. Program is free; RSVP at 904-259-3520 or email alamborn@ufl.edu by Wednesday, January 28th at 5pm. (For a brief overview on pruning see article on page 2.)

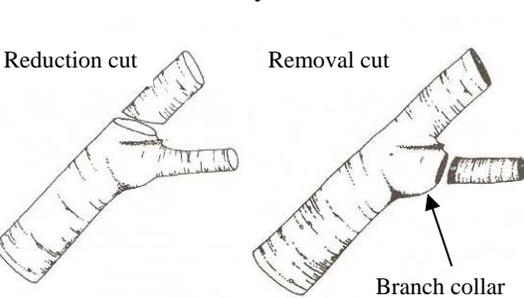
A Guide To Pruning Trees



Pruning trees to create and maintain strong structure while also producing a healthy tree with a functional and pleasing form can be very difficult for those that have not had any formal training. This article is aimed at giving tree owners some basic guidelines for pruning trees, but unfortunately will not be enough to make you an expert. If you would like more detailed instruction on pruning trees, please sign up for the class “Introduction to Pruning: Trees and Shrubs” taking place in late January. January is a great time to prune trees because many trees are dormant this time of year. Trees that are not dormant have had their growth slowed considerably which minimizes the stress caused by pruning cuts. Of course, dead and diseased branches can be removed at any time as well as any hazardous limbs that need structural pruning. Many people may not realize that properly pruned trees are likely to live longer and be stronger and healthier than trees that are not pruned. This is because, in many ways, pruning corrects defects and minimizes poor structure. However, not all defects can be corrected with pruning and many take years to correct.

With that said, you should never prune if you do not know why the tree needs pruning. Randomly removing branches with live foliage is very stressful on trees: photosynthesis can be drastically reduced, slowing root growth and making it harder for the tree to defend itself against insects and diseases as well. Therefore specific pruning objectives should be defined and met with each pruning. Are you pruning to improve structure of the trunk and branches? Remove defects? Clear branches from a street or structure? Reduce size? Slow growth rate? Thin the canopy? Direct future growth? After deciding why pruning is needed, visualize the tree as it will appear in ten and twenty years from now. Then choose the branches that should be pruned to provide the desired effect and remove them in the correct manner.

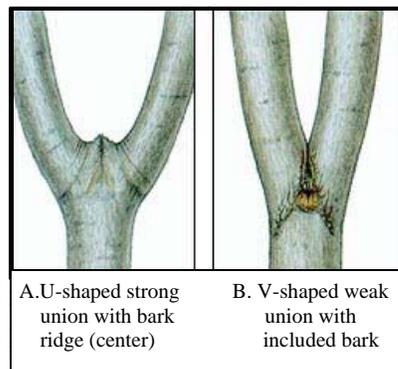
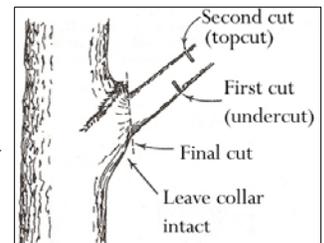
In general, there are two types of pruning cuts that can be made. You can either shorten the length of a stem by pruning back to a smaller limb (reduction cut) or prune a branch back to the trunk or parent branch (removal cut), as demonstrated in the figure below. Never cut a stem to an indiscriminate length and never “top” a plant. “Topping” is an inappropriate (though common among crape myrtles) technique used to reduce tree size that makes heading cuts through a stem more than two years old. This destroys tree architecture and serves to initiate decay in the cut stem. When removing



a branch, never make a flush cut by removing part of the branch collar. The branch collar is the swollen area at the base of a branch where it joins the trunk or parent branch that results from overlapping trunk and branch tissue. When making pruning cuts, avoiding this area will prevent the spread of decay from the cut limb into other parts of the tree. In some cases, the collar is not as pronounced as in the figure to the left or the collar is not visible at all, and therefore care should be taken. Just remember that a good pruning cut should be round instead of oval-shaped (oval usually means the collar has been removed). For branches larger than one inch in diameter, it is best to follow

specific steps for removal (illustrated lower right) to avoid injury to the tree. This technique reduces the weight of the branch and avoids the branch from being “ripped” or “peeled” away from the tree.

When pruning trees for strong structure, branches with included bark and trees with codominant stems are the two biggest indicators that pruning may be necessary. Large branches with included bark (bark embedded between a branch and the trunk) should be thinned or shortened due to the weak union that is formed, making the branch more susceptible to breakage. A branch union with included bark does not have the traditional bark ridge, an area of rough, typically darkened, raised bark which is formed in the angle at the union of a branch and the trunk (or between two stems) and extends down both sides of the trunk (illustrated lower left). Codominant stems are two (or more) stems growing at about the same rate, and with nearly the same diameter, originating from the same union. Codominant stems compete with each other to be the dominant leader of the tree and often have included bark between them. Many large live oaks have good examples of codominant stems. Poor branch arrangement (orientation and distribution of branches along a trunk) is also a



A. U-shaped strong union with bark ridge (center)
 B. V-shaped weak union with included bark

good reason to structurally prune. Trees that have branches concentrated to one side will gradually begin to lean and branches with improper spacing may eventually grow so close together that bark is included between them.

Please keep in mind that these are only general guidelines for pruning trees and just because your tree has flaws doesn’t necessarily mean the tree will fail. However, it is best to take precautionary measures to ensure your safety and the health of the tree. Sometimes the healthiest looking trees fail without notice and trees with poor form survive the most extreme conditions. When pruning trees of any size, you should always be sure to use the correct equipment and follow safety precautions. Also consider hiring a certified arborist to do the job for you.



Celebrate Florida's Arbor Day



Cabbage Palm
Sabal palmetto

The Sabal Palm is Florida's State Tree and is featured on the seal of Florida's State flag.

Florida Arbor Day Emphasizes the Role of Trees in Florida's Commitment to Clean Air and Environmental Preservation

Arbor Day is a nationally-celebrated observance that promotes the benefits of trees in the urban environment and encourages tree planting and care. Arbor Day was the creation of Julius Sterling Morton of Nebraska, and first took place in 1872. Morton served as President Grover Cleveland's Secretary of Agriculture, improving agricultural techniques throughout the United States. Nearly one hundred years later, in 1970, President Richard Nixon proclaimed the last Friday in April as National Arbor Day. However, individual states conduct their own Arbor Day celebrations at various times of the year. Florida is first to celebrate Arbor Day each year (along with Louisiana), on the third Friday of January.

In celebration of Florida's Arbor Day, citizens are encouraged to do their part in helping to reduce air pollution, conserve energy, and beautify the State of Florida by planting trees. Planting native and other "Florida Friendly" trees protects the environmental balance and beauty of the Sunshine State by preventing the spread of invasive plants and offsetting some of the potential impacts of climate change. Trees absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂), one of the primary greenhouse gases caused by human activities, and in turn release oxygen into the atmosphere. It is widely believed that carbon sequestration (removing carbon from the atmosphere and depositing it in a reservoir) of trees could reduce future climate-related damage and would be more beneficial than costly. Forests are the world's second largest carbon reservoirs, behind oceans, with one acre of forestland sequestering between 150 to 200 tons of CO₂ in its first 40 years. Overall, planting new trees remains one of the least expensive, most effective means of drawing excess CO₂ from the atmosphere.

Florida celebrates Arbor Day in January because many trees are dormant (not actively growing) and lose less water through transpiration (evaporation of water from leaves) this time of year, making them easier to transplant without putting them through too much stress. Please celebrate Arbor Day this year by planting a tree yourself. If you don't have enough room to plant your own, consider planting a seed or tree seedling which you can later give to someone who does. Otherwise, just take a moment to appreciate the trees around you.

For a list of tree species that grow well in Baker County, visit our website and click on "Fact Sheets" under the Lawn and Garden section.

"He that plants trees loves others beside himself."
— Thomas Fuller

"Acts of creation are ordinarily reserved for gods and poets. To plant a pine, one need only own a shovel."
— Aldo Leopold

"The best friend on earth of man is the tree. When we use the tree respectfully and economically, we have one of the greatest resources on earth."
—Frank Lloyd Wright

"We make an immense mistake when we think of trees as solely an aesthetic member of a community. They cut pollution, they cool the air, they prevent erosion, they muffle sound, they produce oxygen. Then, after all that, they look good."
—Dr. Richard Leakey

Arboretums and Parks of Interest:

Fairchild Oak @ Bulow Creek State Park (north of Ormond Beach)

Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens Palm & Cycad Arboretum (on Beach Blvd in Jacksonville)

Treaty Oak @ Treaty Oak Park (on Prudential Dr. in Jacksonville)

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Extension programs are open to all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, handicap, or national origin. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person needing a special accommodation to participate in any activity, should contact the Baker County Cooperative Extension Service at 1025 West Macclenny Avenue, Macclenny, FL 32063 or telephone (904) 259-3520 no later than five (5) days prior to the event. Hearing impaired persons can access the foregoing telephone by contacting the Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8770 (voice) or 1-800-955-8771 (TDD).

Upcoming Programs & Events: February

- February 10th — **Energy Wise Landscaping** 6:30pm to 7:30pm at the Baker County Extension Office (Agriculture Center). Learn about low energy landscape practices that reduce energy dependence and allow us to use less water, fertilizer, and pesticides. Program is free; RSVP at 904-259-3520 or email alamborn@ufl.edu by Monday, February 9th at 5pm.
- February 2nd-26th (weekly classes) — **Florida Master Naturalist Training: Freshwater Wetlands Habitat Module** This is a 40-hour, Extension Program on Florida's ecosystems taught in three modules targeting adults interested in learning about the environment, including plants, animals, birds, fish, and invertebrates in freshwater wetland habitats. Classes are on Monday and Thursday nights from 6pm to 9pm with three Saturday field trips. Classes will be held at the Doctors Inlet Civic League Building in Orange Park, FL. Cost for the class is \$225 and includes a reference workbook, certificate of achievement, and a FMNP patch and lapel pin. You may register online at www.masternaturalist.org or contact Raymond Zerba, Clay County Extension, at rzerba@ufl.edu for more information.
- February 5th & 6th — **Palm Management in the Florida Landscape** 7:45am to 5pm each day at the University of Florida/IFAS Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center in Davie, FL. Four palm specialists will be teaching on topics such as diagnosing palm problems, physiological disorders, nutrient deficiencies, insects and diseases, fertilizer formulations and application techniques, and many more. Advanced registration fee of \$300 is due by January 23, 2009 (or until class is full). CEUs applied for include ISA, FNGLA, and FDACS. For more information and to reserve your spot for "Palm School", contact Dr. Monica Elliot at 954-577-6315 or melliott@ufl.edu.