

## TIMELY TIPS TO BE TWEETED AND WHAT TO DO NOW

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If you can be outdoors, doing so connects us with nature for fresh air and exercise. And yard and garden activities have been proven to help reduce stress.

For timely tips, I will be tweeting updates each week. Follow me @KellyFeehan2 for yard and garden information on twitter. If you have questions, email [kfeehan2@unl.edu](mailto:kfeehan2@unl.edu). Email photos if you have something that needs to be identified.

And when you can get outdoors, here are some tasks to work on. Late March through June is a good time to prune most shade trees.

To develop structural stability, the most important time to prune is during the first 10 to 15 years after planting. Trees often are not pruned until a structural issue develops; then the issue is more difficult to deal with and pruning causes a larger wound the tree may not seal.

Head out into your yard and inspect younger trees for pruning needs. Avoid pruning the first year or two after planting except to remove a co-dominant leader and dead or broken branches.

From about year three and on, do a small amount of pruning each year but wait to remove the lowest branches on the trunk for as long as possible. Leave these until they are an inch or a bit more in diameter. By waiting to remove the lowest branches, root growth and a sturdy trunk are promoted.

Over the first 10 to 15 years after planting, focus on removing double leaders if still needed, crisscrossing branches, branches growing closely vertical to another branch, and branches developing ingrown bark. These are usually branches with very narrow angles where they connect to the trunk.

Summer blooming shrubs can be pruned now through May. Avoid pruning spring bloomers or flower buds will be removed and blooming prevented.

For shrub pruning, the most common mistake is not pruning so shrubs become a tangled mess with many dead stems in the center and a shell of leaves on the outside. The second mistake is repeatedly reducing the height of a shrub but rarely, if ever, thinning stems.

Avoid only shearing to reduce height. Also thin out about a third or less of the stems as well. Thinning is more important than shearing or heading back and involves removing a stem where it attaches to another stem or near ground level. When thinning, remove the largest and oldest stems.

While it's too early for most lawn care, lawns can be raked to remove overwintering leaves and pick up debris or litter that collected over winter.

Also make note of thin or bare spots in turf that may need overseeding in April. If overseeding is done, do not apply a preemergence herbicide to those areas, unless you use a product that allows turfgrass seed to germinate and grow. Be sure to read and follow label directions for all pesticide products.

Most preemergence herbicides are applied to control warm season annual weeds, like crabgrass. These weeds do not begin germination until after soils have warmed later in spring. For this reason, do-it-yourselfers have the best success if they wait until soil temperatures have reached at least 50 degrees Fahrenheit to apply a preemergence herbicide; which is usually in late April or later.