

Dates of Upcoming Events:

Spring Fever Garden Forum – March 25th, March 27th, April 1st, April 3rd, 6:30 to 8:30pm each night at the Courthouse in Finley. Check out www.ag.ndsu.edu/springfever for more information.

2014 Farm Bill Informational Meeting – March 28th on the 6th floor of the Grand Forks County office building from 9:30am to noon. Dwight Aakre, NDSU Extension Farm Management Specialist and local FSA and NRCS staff will present information.

Township Officers Meeting – April 2nd at the Press Box in Finley, 7:30am breakfast, 8:00am meeting

Yard and Garden Workshop – May 8th at the Hope American Legion at 6:30pm

This is a great time of the year to prune your trees. The best time to prune trees is when they are still dormant. Also, if you're like me and have spring fever, this might be a good way to get out into the yard to give you a horticulture fix until everything starts to green up. The exception to this rule is for trees that produce heavy sap flow such as maple and birch trees and for spring blooming shrubs such as lilacs. Heavy sap producing trees should be pruned after full leaving out is complete to prevent excess sap loss and spring flowering shrubs should be pruned right after bloom because the majority of flower buds on spring flowering shrubs are on last year's stem growth.

Diseased, damaged, or dead limbs should be removed routinely during the year especially, if they pose danger to people or property, but pruning trees for shape, form, and to thin should be done when trees are dormant. Growth and wound closure are maximized if trees are pruned before the spring growth flush. Heavy pruning should be avoided after the spring growth flush because during this time trees have just expended a great deal of energy to produce early foliage and shoot growth. Therefore, after the spring growth flush, trees have a tougher time recovering from stresses, such as pruning. The amount of pruning a tree can handle depends on the trees age, size, and species. Newly planted trees should not be pruned until they have recovered from the stress of being transplanted which is usually in the second or third year of growth. Younger trees recover from the stress of pruning more easily than mature trees do. As a rule of thumb, no more than 25% of a tree should be pruned at once and less for mature trees.

Pruning cuts should be made just outside the branch collar. The collar should not be cut because the collar contains trunk or parent branch tissue. If a large branch is to be removed, the weight of the branch should be reduced first to reduce the possibility of tearing the bark. This is done by making an undercut about 12 to 18 inches from the branch's point of attachment about half way through the branch. Then make a second cut from the top directly above the first cut, continuing until the branch has been removed. What is left is a stub about 12 to 18 inches from the branch's attachment point that can be easily removed without the risk of tearing the tree trunk bark. The final cut should be to cut back the stub to the branch collar. After the pruning has been complete, wound dressings, tar, paints, or other wound coverings *should not* be used. Research has shown that wound coverings do not reduce decay, do not speed wound closure, and rarely prevent insect or disease infestations. For more information, contact the Steele County Extension office at 701-524-2253, e-mail Alicia at alicia.harstad@ndsu.edu, or "Like" us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/steelecountyextension. NDSU is an equal opportunity institution.