



PHOTO BY WANDA OGDEN

### This Yard's Always In Bloom

Informal beds of annuals and perennials provide a continuous display of color throughout most of the year in the corner yard of Don and Barbara Erickson, 3 Midiron Court, Calabash, the Carolina Shores Garden Club Yard of the Month. In bloom now are masses of daffodils and crocuses. Cacti and flowering trees and shrubs round out the attractive landscape.

## Now Best Time To Prune Fruit Trees

In order to obtain maximum yield and quality, most fruit bearing woody plants must be pruned annually. The most frequent questions I get asked about are concerned with when and how.

The answer to "when to prune?" is relatively straight forward. Fruit trees can be pruned anytime during the year without killing them. However, the best time of the year to prune most fruit or nut trees (apples, pears, pecans, plums, peaches and the like) is in the spring or late winter several weeks prior to bud break. I recommend this because the pruning wound is exposed to the environment for the least amount of time before healing begins and you can easily judge and remove winter-killed stems. I prune my peach and apple trees during February and continue into early March. I have even pruned right up until flowering and seen no detrimental effects (some experts even recommend waiting until flowering).

In many commercial orchards, fruit trees will be lightly pruned immediately following fruit harvest. I prune out suckers and water sprouts from my peach trees in late July or early August. This generally cleans up the lower quarter of the tree and allows better insecticide spray penetration into the tree canopy and onto the trunk for the August peach borer invasion.

The "how to prune" a fruit tree is much more complicated. How a tree is pruned will depend upon the species, variety, rootstock, plant age, and cultivation intensity. Correctly pruning fruit trees involves about 50 percent knowledge and 50 percent technique (art).

I will briefly cover several principles to remember when pruning your peach or apple trees.

Peach trees require heavy pruning. Peach fruit develop only on the previous season's growth. Therefore, older wood is no good for fruit. Older wood should be used to develop a limb architecture that can hold the fruit crop (if you are bracing your limbs, then you are pruning incorrectly). The limbs of a peach should form a canopy that resembles an upside-down umbrella. No limb should exceed eye level. The center of the tree should be open and free of growth. A well-pruned 5-year-old peach tree will have four or five major limbs that branch out from the main trunk. These limbs should start branching out from the main trunk 18 inches to 24 inches from the ground. The main trunk should be 6 inches to 10 inches in diameter. Stop by a commercial peach orchard and closely observe a well-pruned tree.

Apples do not require as much

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pruning as peaches. Large amounts of stem and leaf growth coupled with light fruit harvest indicate excessive pruning. Little shoot growth and large numbers of small fruit indicate the need for heavier pruning. Optimum shoot growth for an established tree should be about 8 inches to 12 inches a season.

Apples (or pear) trees are grafted to many different kinds of rootstocks. It is important to know if your tree is a dwarf, semidwarf, or standard size tree because this will determine pruning technique. In addition, some apples are spur-types and others are non-spur types. Spur-type apples varieties require substantially less pruning than other types.

Semi-dwarf rootstocks are most commonly used for residential fruit trees. For maximum fruit yields from semi-dwarf trees, the overall plant shape should resemble a tall triangle. A central leader or main trunk should be developed. The primary scaffold branches should form a 90-degree angle with the trunk and be well spaced all the way up the tree. Prune out branches that cross or crowd the primary scaffold branches. Prune out any suckers, water sprouts or low branches within two feet of the ground.

There are a number of excellent N.C. State Extension bulletins that describe the process and show excellent diagrams. These bulletins

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## Homemakers Club Members Show Skills In Cultural Arts Competition

Fourteen members of local Homemakers Extension clubs showed their crafts at the recently cultural arts crafts competition at the Brunswick County Home Economics Food Lab in Bolivia.

Blue ribbon winners include Jean Green, Calabash, for painting on a canvas bag; Reva Ferguson, Calabash, knitted sweater; Dorothy Volinic, Calabash, U.S. Navy emblem in cross stitch; Julia Bailey, Boiling Spring Lakes, chair caning; Lena Beachum, Town Creek, black and white ceramic mime.

Also Eleanor Hoff, Beachcombers, machine quilting; Deraline McAllister, Supply, handcrafted toy from plastic mesh stitching, Barbie RV; and Lena Beachum, Town Creek, miscellaneous creations, an E-H mascot, a stuffed dog with the Extension Homemakers emblem on its thigh.

Other entries included a rainbow rag rug in crochet by Julia Bailey, cross stitch pictures by Eleanor Hoff, and wide-brimmed straw hat with cross-stitch band by

Pat Nash, ceramic Indian chief by Edith Ogden, Guys and Dolls Club; ceramic Oriental jar by Pat Collins, Beachcombers; and doll clothes by Nell Mayberry, Boiling Spring Lakes.

Judging was by Karen Stanley and Jerri Piazza. Twenty-one club members were on hand for the viewing and luncheon. Each of the county's seven clubs was responsible for bringing one item for the buffet lunch.

Blue ribbon entries will be entered in the cultural arts craft competition at the South Central District meeting at Sea Trail March 25.

Members may attend the District Heritage Skills workshop held each spring, or learn from workshops held locally by those who have attended the district workshop.

The next workshop will be in Fayetteville April 28 and 29. Club members and non-club members are welcome. For more information, contact the Homemakers Extension Office, 253-4425.

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