



### July Wedding Planned

Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Schmalzer of Shallotte have announced the engagement of their daughter, Amy Beth Schmalzer, to James Harvey Spriggs, son of Keith Spriggs of Cherokee, Kansas, and Joanne Kopez of Bentonville, Ark. A July wedding is planned.

## Leon Redbone; Taylor To Perform At Thalian

Two nights of rhythm and blues are scheduled in Wilmington as Leon Redbone and Koko Taylor perform in separate concerts at Thalian Hall.

Redbone, discovered by the nation on "Saturday Night Live" in the mid-1970s, has gone on to become one of the country's most unique performers.

He brings his blend of down-South burlesque rhythm and blues to Thalian Hall on Thursday, March 17, for an 8 p.m. concert. Tickets will cost \$15, \$13 or \$10.

"Queen of the Blues" Koko Taylor will be in town Friday, March 18, also for an 8 p.m. show. Taylor, a master of genuine Chicago blues, is a Grammy award winner and ten-time winner of the W.C. Handy Award. She will be backed by her band, The Blues Machine.

Tickets for Taylor's show will cost \$16, \$14 or \$10.

Discount tickets for either show are available to groups and members of Thalian Hall. For tickets or reser-

ervations, call or the box office at 1-800-523-2820. Both shows are presented by Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.

## Bolivia Names Nine Weeks Honor Students

Bolivia Elementary School has announced its honor roll for the second nine weeks.

Earning all A's were Leslie Alston, Nicole McGowan, Krista Thompson and Jessica Williams.

Named to the A/B honor roll were Charli Barnhill, James Blackwell, Caleb Candelaria, Jami Carpenter, Mary Cole, Deivin Gardner, Nakita Johnson, Jumila Joyner, Tabitha Lewis;

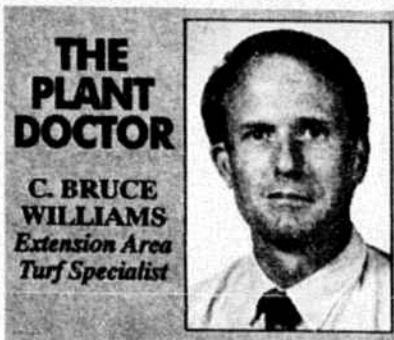
Also Adrienne Lugo, Holly Ly-saght, Holly Maggard, Brandon McKenna, Maleta Murray, Sarah Patterson, Holly Shonovsky, Amanda Smith and Angineek Ward.

# All You Need To Know About Fruit Tree Pruning

**Dear Plant Doctor:** Is it too late to prune my fruit trees? Can you send me some information on the proper method to prune the apple and peach trees in my backyard?  
—Southport

**ANSWER:** Spring is rapidly approaching and soon fruit trees will be in full bloom. Contrary to common garden mythology, the optimum time to prune most fruit trees occurs just prior to bud break in the spring. Pruning can proceed safely throughout bloom without any dire consequences. For most gardeners in southeastern North Carolina, the next three weeks will be the ideal time to prune your fruit trees if you have not already done so.

Pruning fruit trees requires an understanding of the basic pruning cuts, the correct equipment, proper disposal of prunings, and a knowledge of the optimum growth form for the fruit tree. Proper pruning promotes strong, well-spaced branches that can support a full load of fruit. Pruned trees reduce pesticide applications because trees are healthier, and pesticide sprays, when utilized, penetrate more thoroughly into the canopy for better coverage. Proper pruning increases fruit set, fruit size, improves fruit color, and reduces the need to prop-up limbs prior to harvest. Pruning old trees is an invigorating process and in some



**THE PLANT DOCTOR**  
**C. BRUCE WILLIAMS**  
Extension Area  
Turf Specialist

situations can partially substitute for nitrogen fertilizer applications. In fact, many experts feel that pruning should increase in severity as the tree ages!

You will only need to know two types of pruning cuts for all your fruit tree pruning. A thinning-out cut removes a twig, branch, or limb at the point of origin. Thinning-out cuts do not stimulate vegetative growth but are used to maintain good limb spacing or tree form, to remove diseased limbs, and create an solid architecture for maximum fruit yields.

A heading-back cut removes a twig, branch, or limb back to a living bud, twig, branch, or limb. Heading-back cuts will generally stimulate new growth.

All fruit tree pruning can be successfully performed using only hand

shears, lopping shears, pole pruners, and a high quality pruning saw. Be especially careful when pruning diseased fruit trees to "dip" your pruning implements into a solution of rubbing alcohol between cuts, since fire blight and other diseases can be spread tree to tree on contaminated pruning implements. Be careful to collect and destroy all prunings from fruit trees to minimize the spread of disease and insect pests.

Many methods have been devised for pruning fruit trees but the two most widely used techniques are the central leader method and the open-center method. With either method, the age of the tree is very important in determining how much pruning should be performed. Newly planted trees may require 2 to 5 years of "training" with heavy pruning, while older "trained" trees may require minimal pruning.

The central leader method trains a fruit tree to have only a single trunk with well-spaced horizontal limbs spread throughout the canopy of the tree. The central leader method works best for apple, pear, cherry, pecan, and some varieties plum. The end result of a tree properly pruned looks like the shape of a triangle or Christmas tree in silhouette.

The open-center method trains growth on a fruit tree to have 3 to 5 large support limbs originating and

radiating out from an open crotch 15 to 24 inches from the soil surface. A properly pruned tree will resemble an open bowl or vase. After pruning, I prefer no limbs exceed eye-level.

Peaches, nectarines, and Japanese plums respond dramatically to this pruning method by producing greater numbers of high-quality fruit. These tree species must be pruned hard to maintain vigorous growth and good fruit set.

With either of these pruning methods, remember that nearly all fruit trees flower and fruit on the previous seasons' growth. If your tree has not been productive because of poor pruning or other factors, then the first year of a "proper" pruning may result in a tree that looks butchered to the untrained eye. A visit a commercial orchard before bloom is very educational; pay special attention to tree shape, pruning cuts, and cultivation given juvenile and mature fruit trees.

For additional information on getting your fruit trees into shape, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service for the publication "Pruning Fruit Trees in North Carolina—AG29" and send me a SASE.

Send your gardening questions and comments to the Plant Doctor, P.O. Box 109, Bolivia, NC 28422.

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