

NEWS RELEASE

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Pruning Needed?

A bright spot in the recent weather was the added moisture. It appeared to me that the branches that broke from trees were ones that were flawed. Smaller dead branches came out of some of my trees. Since I hadn't gotten to them, this was nature's way of pruning for me.

Some of my shrubs laid over but have bounced back. This indicates that the best thing to do is let nature run its course. Attempting to remove ice from plants will likely cause more harm than good. Spring is a good time to make judgement on shaping up damaged shrubs.

The hardest hit in my landscape were the ornamental grasses. They won't be straightening up. I might as well cut them off about six inches from the ground now. Since my strawberries need mulched, the grass blades will be used as my straw.

Pruning on plants can be done at any time. Prune broken branches to the next larger branch or to the trunk. If cutting back to the trunk, do not cut flush with the trunk but rather at the collar area between the branch and the trunk. Cutting flush with the trunk leaves a much larger wound than cutting at the collar and takes longer to heal.

Take large limbs off in stages. If you try to take off a large limb in one cut, it will often break before the cut is finished and strip bark from the tree. Instead, first make a cut about 15 inches from the trunk. Start from the bottom and cut one-third of the way up through the limb. Make the second cut from the top down but start 2 inches further away

from the trunk than the first. The branch will break away as you make the second cut. The third cut, made at the collar area, removes the stub that is left.

Big and heavy pruning is best left to the certified arborist that has the equipment and experience. A good arborist knows how to prune trees so that storm breakage is less likely to occur. Preventing damage is better than trying to fix it once it has happened.

You can find out more information on this and other horticulture topics by going to the Riley County, K-State Research and Extension website at [www.riley.ksu.edu](http://www.riley.ksu.edu). Gregg may be contacted by calling 785-537-6350 or stopping by 110 Courthouse Plaza in Manhattan or e-mail: [geyeston@ksu.edu](mailto:geyeston@ksu.edu).