

What's Coming Up:

Janet Macunovich and
Steven Nikkila answer
your growing concerns
Issue 86, March 27, 2010

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When the protective covers pop off the buds of hardy trees and shrubs, we gardeners come to attention: To clip now is to redirect a great deal of energy in our chosen direction. See pages 7 - 15.

Plant pests stir and show themselves now, too. Insects that feed on a plant time their own winter rest to end as their favorite plant's growing season begins. If you're looking to head off a repeat performance by a sucking insect such as pine aphid, read the signs at budbreak to learn if this year you'll need to intervene. If it looks like the pest's presence will be heavy, budbreak is time to start countermeasures, such as dormant oil. See page 6.

Thinning grass may be going in the right direction

I'd like to get the lawn into better shape. It's thin. It seems like nothing I do ever lasts. There are a lot of trees in my yard. - Pat -

It's not you, Pat, it's the way it is. In a shady yard, to keep a nice lawn you should aerate, overseed, topdress with slow release organic fertilizer, water more frequently, prune the trees to let in more light.... repeat. It's **a never-ending fight to keep a lawn under trees**, because grass doesn't belong in the shade. Even the fescue grass we plant there only tolerates shade.

*Grow what loves a place.
Do not settle for plants that only
tolerate the situation your garden
offers. Would you take a driving
vacation with a companion who
only tolerates you?*

How about this: Let the lawn keep going in the direction it's going. In other words, let it die.
Replace it with groundcover.

Outline areas that encompass individual trees or groups of trees. Make these beds large enough to be in balance with the trees' mass. Spread a couple of inches of compost, or more as necessary to level

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the ground between roots. Use mulch, or newspapers and mulch, to smother the grass. During the summer, while the grass is dying out, take a look at various shady groundcovers.

You might start with our recommendations (*Covering the ground below trees*, below and on page 3) but make your final choices based on what you've personally seen and liked.

This fall, plant one or a few species under those trees. We're partial to a multi-species quilt. It offers more visual interest and also counters the weaknesses that would come with growing a monoculture where conditions are not exactly the same throughout the area.

Start with small plants and spread their roots wide as you put them in the ground. Don't crowd the plants or expect immediate fill. Water them well and they'll knit together, then spread along the group's perimeter to mix it up with neighboring species.

Shade-loving groundcovers can be established under trees to replace a thin lawn. Species adapted to shade require less care there than lawn, which can only tolerate shade, at best. Make beds under trees that are in scale with the trees' canopies.



Covering the ground below trees

A groundcover is a spreading perennial plant able to create such a dense cover that it suppresses weeds -- it's a living mulch.

In this illustration, the bed is planted with more than one species of groundcover. We call that a quilt. On page 3 are groundcovers for each position, A through D.



All of these on our lists are able to suppress weeds but are not so aggressive as to crowd out all others. Numbers indicate USDA hardiness zone -- how much cold that species can survive.

A: Mounded, medium-to-coarse textured species:

Bigleaf forget-me-not (*Brunnera macrophylla*) Z3
Bigroot perennial geranium
(*G. macrorrhizum*) Z3 (in this photo, it's on the left)
Canada anemone (*A. canadensis*) Z3
Large flowered comfrey (*Symphytum grandiflorum*) Z4
Lungwort (*Pulmonaria* species) Z3
Pigsqueak (*Bergenia cordifolia*) Z3



B: Fine textured ground-hugging species:

Palm sedge (*Carex muskingiensis*) Z4
Dwarf Astilbe (*A. chinensis pumila*) Z4
Golden star (*Chrysogonum virginianum*) Z5
Irish moss (*Arenaria verna*) Z3
Sweet woodruff (*Galium odoratum*) Z4

C: Medium-to-coarse textured ground-huggers:

Ajuga (*A. reptans*) Z3
Allegheny spurge (*Pachysandra procumbens*) Z5
Barren strawberry (*Waldsteinia ternata*) Z4
Barrenwort (*Epimedium x versicolor*) Z5
Bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*) Z2
Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*, the species,
not clump-forming hybrids) Z3
Serbian bellflower (*Campanula poscharskyana*) Z3
White leaf lamium (*Lamium maculatum*) Z3
Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) Z3

Three rules for using ground covers

1. Use only one or a few selected varieties.
2. Plant large-leaved ground covers when the scale is large and small-leaved groundcovers where the scale is small.
3. Combine only plants that will comfortably co-exist.

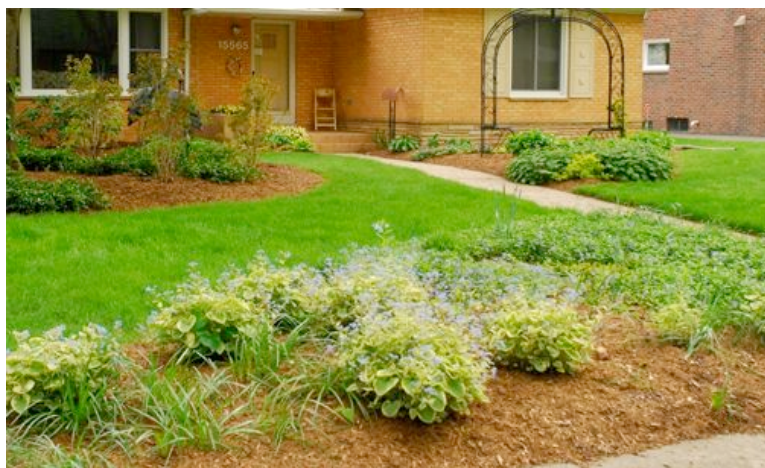
David S. MacKenzie, *Perennial Groundcovers*
(No better book on groundcover!)

D: Taller, vertical and ferny species:

Japanese forest grass/satin grass (*Hakonechloa macra*) Z5
Painted fern (*Athyrium goeringianum*) Z4
Leatherwood fern (*Dryopteris marginalis*) Z3
Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum* species) Z3
Starry false Solomon's seal
(*Smilacina stellata*) Z4

Some others for shade, best grown on their own. Too aggressive for quilts because they are more likely to overrun companions than mingle:

Archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*) Z4
English ivy (*Hedera helix*) Z5
Evergreen *Pachysandra* (*P. terminalis*) Z5
Goutweed/bishop's weed/snow on the mountain (*Aegopodium podagraria*) Z3
Lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*) Z2
Lilyturf (*Liriope spicata*) Z4
Myrtle (*Vinca minor*) Z4
New York fern (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*) Z2
Ostrich fern (*Matteucia struthiopteris*) Z2



No simple answers to emerald ash borer problem

In April I start worrying about three old, beautiful ash trees I've managed to save from emerald ash borer -- so far. **When is the best time to treat them** exactly for Michigan? I have faithfully treated my beautiful trees (at our cottage up north near West Branch) for four years and they are still hanging in there. I use Imidacloprid available in Bayer Advance Garden Tree and Shrub Insect control and drench the soil. - Katheryn -

That's **a tough topic**, not quickly or surely answered, Katheryn. Emerald ash borer is a problem that's still so new we have only limited treatment options. Also, we're short on history so we can't act based on relative effectiveness of options.

Pretty much the only insecticide available to us that's shown reasonable effect is the one you name, the **systemic insecticide** imidacloprid. Even then, there's some uncertainty inherent in the method related to uptake of the chemical. The chemical must be taken up by the roots* and moved into all parts of the tree. It must be soaked into the whole the root zone, remain there until spring growth begins and draws water up into the tree, and spread out as it moves up.

*(Injecting the insecticide can reduce some of the uncertainty, but that procedure is best done by a professional and is problematic as a long-term strategy.)

All of that is **subject to variables** of weather as well as the condition of the tree and soil. Soil that's hard packed, a root zone that isn't where we imagine it to be,



In southeast Michigan and Ontario where emerald ash borer made its first North American appearance, the decline of ash trees in the first years of the infestation was attributed to other causes. By the time the culprit was identified as an Asian insect which bores into the bark and consumes the irreplaceable cambium layer (thanks in large part to our reader, T.L. Hart of Canton, Michigan), a huge population of the insects existed. Even large, healthy trees were so heavily attacked that they didn't simply decline over years and fail, but died in a single year. Their cambium was destroyed so quickly and thoroughly that the bark seemed to explode off the tree. These photos show the same street in Livonia, Michigan, tree-lined one year, bare the next. with a single remaining ash on its way out, too.

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weather than can delay or advance budbreak, heavy rains that flush the soil, a tree with damaged roots or cambium that cannot take up or uniformly distribute the chemical... these all have an impact on effectiveness.

In general, ash trees in Michigan break bud and can take up chemicals from the soil beginning in mid-April, but microclimates and individual trees vary. The best course is to watch your trees so you can **apply the pesticide and water it in well as soon as their buds swell.**

We hope your trees fare well. For our part, we decided against chemical treatments for emerald ash borer unless the tree involved was large and very special. One factor in our decision was that there will no end to these treatments. Emerald ash borer is not going to go away. Like American elms that made it through the 1970's blight but must still be treated each year, each treated ash represents **a long term, expensive commitment.**

In addition, we are concerned about the astronomical amounts of a single chemical being applied across such a wide area, being taken up not only by ashes but every other plant in the treated soil. Systemic insecticides appear in all parts of a treated plant, from pollen to stem, with potential to affect all the plant's users from hummingbirds and bees, to butterflies and beneficial predator insects as well as target pests. In addition, insects developed **resistance to chemicals** used so heavily in the 1950's and 60's and can do so again. What works this year may fail to kill next year's borers.

Choosing a new tree

Whether it's an ash tree brought low by emerald ash borer, an old willow discovered to be decayed and unsteady, or an oak split by lightning, it's a big adjustment to lose a tree. If you're facing this challenge, *Janet and Steven Give you Trees* can help you. It includes descriptions and pictures of trees we recommend, planting steps, care of new trees, what to do with wood from the tree you take down, and more. To buy your own copy of this magazine see pages 20 & 21.

We **opted to take down ashes on family properties and plant different species.** We started doing that six years ago, when we removed 19 ashes from Mom's place. Some of our replacement trees -- not planted large, just planted well -- are already 15' tall.



We live in the area where the emerald ash borer first appeared in North America. No one knew what was going on until the pest population was so large that even healthy old trees were infested and died in a year. We had little hope for our trees. You, on the edge of the expanding invasion, may be able to stave off the invaders for a while. Perhaps other tactics will be developed in the interim and we can change our tune.

Plant development is more sure than calendar date for predicting the first appearance of an insect each year. In phenology -- the seasonal occurrence and concurrence of natural phenomena -- a showy plant's bloom time cues us to other, more subtle developments. For instance, honeybees reappear each year as snow crocuses (left) bloom. Many trees resume growth as that bloom is fading. Bloom and fade may vary between March 1 and April 4. So we mark the snow crocus' earliest bloom date on our calendar, a reminder to be ready with fertilizer or pesticide that a tree needs to take up through its roots as it wakes up in spring. Then we wait to actually apply that material once we see the fading bloom.

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Pine-sucking aphids and adelgids bug the gardener, not the tree

What organic method do you recommend for pine aphid activity on white pines so we can keep them looking healthy? - S.J. -

White pine aphids suck sap from needles and twigs. At year's end, before that year's aphids die, they lay **black eggs in end-to-end rows on pine needles**.

These eggs hatch at about the time a pine resumes growth in spring. The aphids cluster on needles and young shoots to feed and produce more aphids. By late summer when aphid population peaks, needles may yellow and drop prematurely. If the weather's particularly dry, heavily infested shoots may flag and die.

Pine bark adelgid, another sap-sucking, aphid-like pest of white pine, takes up residence on the trunk of a white pine. These insects develop a cottony covering as they age, so that an adelgid colony can **look like a patch of fuzzy whitewash on a tree's trunk**. These insects go through winter as nearly mature females, which become active and lay eggs in late April or early May. The yellow-brown, waxy eggs are next to or beneath the fuzzy white adult.

A heavy infestation of either insect can do lasting harm to a very young pine. Unless there are recurrent, heavy infestations, **older trees usually shake off the effects**. Natural predators such as lady beetles, hoverflies, predaceous midges and lacewings move in on heavy infestations and can do an admirable job of cleaning up the pests.

If the infested pine is in/above a garden, effects of the infestation that reach beyond the tree may make it necessary to control these insects. Sucking pests like these create honeydew -- liquid excrement -- which falls onto things below. **Dark sooty mold grows** on that coating, blocking light to the leaves and slowing plant growth. Sooty mold can also ruin the looks of a garden, when **decks, furniture, art work** and what should be foliage of various colors takes on a uniformly dark appearance.

Predicting severity of a pest population, and **timing** what you do to strike the most susceptible life stage is **critical in insect control**, organic or otherwise. Go look now where you noticed heavy sooty mold last year. Look up to locate

For aphid control as good or better than chemical insecticide: Clear water rinses, soap, recognizing and removing eggs, letting ladybugs feed



Have an understory of cornelian cherry trees (*Cornus mas*, in bloom above) below the limbs of a pine? You might notice sooty mold on the *Cornus*' leaves one summer because the pines' pests were abundant and dripping excrement on things below. The next spring, you can use the cornelian cherry's bloom as your reminder to check on the pines for signs of aphid trouble. Coincidentally, the pines are then beginning to draw heavily on soil moisture, so anything you apply to the soil then will move quickly into the trees.

needles that bear aphid eggs or a main limb or trunk with white fuzzy patches. If there are eggs on more than 30% of the trunk or needles you sample and no signs of natural predators, it's likely the infestation will be heavy. You may want to take action.

You can **do several things, now or at bud-break**. One is to **remove eggs**, by plucking off egg-bearing needles or lightly scrubbing the whitened parts of the trunk to remove adelgids.

You can also keep an eye on eggs to notice when they hatch -- usually about the time buds break and growth resumes. Then, they are vulnerable to a coating of **horticultural oil**, which kills by smothering insects, or **a jet of water** that dislodges the young "crawlers." Once knocked to the ground they cannot reclaim the hospitable sites their mothers chose for them.

You might encourage or **release natural predators**, too. Check gardening catalogs or search on-line for lady beetles, lacewings and beneficial midges.

Then, **follow up**. Look close, regularly. If you see lots of crawlers even after taking early-season control measures, release extra natural predators or apply an insecticidal soap twice, about one week apart. Alleviate the fall-out below the pine with frequent rinsing of whatever is there so sooty mold has nothing to grow on.

* For more, copy this URL to your browser bar: www.entomology.umn.edu/cues/Web/217WhitePineAphid.pdf



If we saw that ladybugs were present among aphids last year, we can be pretty sure they'll be there to take care of things again this year. That's a simpler remedy even than knocking aphids down with a hard spray of water. Check the situation at budbreak on plants that were aphid infested last year. Rest easy, and skip the pesticides if you see any ladybugs or their pupating larvae -- red and black bumps stuck to the plant's bark, about the size of a shoelace eyelet.

For pictures of good-guy, aphid-eating bugs such as lady beetle pupae and eggs, or lacewing eggs, copy these URLs to your browser:
ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/Other/note74/HarmoniaPupae.JPG
ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/NE/convergent_lady_beetle.html
www.uky.edu/Ag/CritterFiles/casefile/insects/beetles/lady/lady.htm
entomology.unl.edu/images/beneficials/lacewings/lacewing_eggs2.jpg

In Janet's garden:

Shrubs to cut now, when and how... and some to leave alone

Shrubs and vines that may need pruning, why and how

Pruning! It's what I'm doing now and it will be a big part of every day for a couple of weeks. I hope the following list, with plant names keyed to how-to cutting directions, helps you decide what to cut and how in your garden.

Numbers following the plant name refer to cutting directions on pages 12 - 15.

Quick reference: If you see a **key number 1,2,3, or 6** for your shrub, attend it in **spring**!

Andromeda (*Pieris japonica*)

- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 5
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 9

Arborvitae (*Thuja* species)

- kept tightly shaped and smaller than its potential, as in a squared hedge. 6 + 6a + 6b
- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 7
- for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 8 + 8a + 8b, then 6 or 7

Azalea (littleleaf- & deciduous *Rhododendrons*)

- kept tightly shaped and smaller than its potential, as in a sculpted foundation. 5
- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 4
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 9

Barberry (*Berberis* species) 3b

Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*). 3 or 3b + 11

Bayberry (left) has attractive, fragrant berries.

Beautyberry, American or hybrid
(*Callicarpa americana* and hybrids)

- for full size and natural shape. 3 + 3a
- has been too big for two or more years. 9

Beautyberry, Japanese (*Callicarpa japonica*)

- for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 3c

Beautybush (*Kolkwitzia amabilis*)

- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 5
- for full size and natural shape. 3 + 3a
- has been too big for two or more years. 2a + 10

Blue mist spirea (*Caryopteris*) 2 or 2a

Boxwood (*Buxus* species)

- tightly shaped and smaller than its potential, as in a squared hedge. 6 + 6a + 6b; 17
- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 7; 17
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 9

Butterfly bush, summer blooming (*Buddleia davidii*) 2 + 2a + 2b, 15a; 17

Chokeberry (*Aronia* species)

- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 7
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a

Clematis, early summer repeat blooming 3 + 3a or 4 + 4a and 15 + 15a

Clematis, small flowered summer- or fall blooming 2 or 2a and 14

Clematis, spring blooming 4

Cotoneaster 3 + 3a or 4



Deutzia 1 or 4

- has been too big for two or more years. 9

Dogwood, redbud, yellowtwig (*Cornus stolonifera*, *C. sibirica*, *C. alba*)

- for maximum winter twig color. 2 + 2b
- for some bloom and berry as well as good winter twig color 3 + 3a
- has been too big for two or more years. 9

Elderberry (*Sambucus* species) 3+ 3a and 13

Euonymus, evergreen

- kept tightly shaped and smaller than its potential, as espaliered on a wall. 6 + 6a + 6b
- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 7
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 9

Falsecypress (*Chamaecyparis* species including Hinoki and threadleaf types)

- kept tightly shaped and smaller than its potential, as in a sculpted foundation. 12
- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 7 + 7a
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 8a + 8b + 8c

Flowering almond (*Prunus* species) 4

Forsythia

- kept smaller than its potential. 4 or 3b
- grown for full size and natural shape. 3 + 3a

Fothergilla 4

Holly (*Ilex* species, deciduous and evergreen)

- tightly shaped and smaller than its potential, as in a low hedge. 5 + 5a
- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 7
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 9

Honeysuckle shrub

- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 4
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 9

Honeysuckle vine

- grown for full size and natural shape. 3 + 3a
- restricting its size. 2, 14 and 15 + 15a

Hydrangea, blue- or pink mophead or lacecap

- kept smaller than its potential. 5 + 5a
- grown for full size and natural shape. 3 + 3a

Hydrangea, climbing

- kept smaller than its potential. 4
- for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a, and 16

Hydrangea, oakleaf (*H. quercifolia*)

- kept smaller than its potential. 5 + 5a
- grown for full size and natural shape. 3 + 3a

Hydrangea, panicle (conical flower cluster) (*H. paniculata*)

- kept smaller than its potential. 2 or 2a, 2b and 14
- in tree form 1 + 1a or 2c
- grown for full size and natural shape. 3 and 14

Why so much cutting?

In spring there can be a lot of shrub-cutting to do, especially if your landscape was overplanted -- an occurrence usually attributable to impatience, ignorance, misdirection, plant collecting lust or some combination of those factors.

Our own preference is to choose a shrub or tree that has a natural shape we like, and which won't grow larger than the space we have for it. Then, we need to clip only to remove dead, damaged or deteriorating limbs.

That's the ever-present, unstated option in any pruning guide: You can simply remove the must-clip plant and replace it with a species or variety better fitted to the place.

Hydrangea, white snowball (*H. arborescens*) 14; 2 or 2a, 2b

Juniper (*Juniperus* species including upright, spreader and rug types)

- kept tightly shaped and smaller than its potential, as in a sculpted foundation. 12
- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 7 + 7a
- for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 8 + 8a + 8b

Kerria

- for great bloom and also good winter twig color. 3 + 3a, or 3c
- already too big. 9

Kerria's bright green twig (right) is pretty in winter. The newest wood is most green. So cut to encourage continual new growth.

Lilac (*Syringa* species)

- tightly shaped and smaller than its potential, as in a hedge. 6 + 6a + 6b + 6c and 15 + 15b
- kept smaller than its potential but with a natural, loose outline. 4
- grown for full size and natural shape. 3



Mock orange (*Philadelphus* species)

- kept smaller than its potential. 4
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a

Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*)

- smaller than its potential but with a natural, loose outline. 4
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 9 + 10

Peony tree (*Paeonia suffruticosa*)

- grown for full size and natural shape. 1

Pine (*Pinus mugho*, dwarf *P. densiflora* and *P. strobus*)

- kept tightly shaped and smaller than its potential. 12
- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 7 + 7a
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years 8 + 8a + 8b

Potentilla 3 + 3c

Quince (*Chaenomeles japonica*)

- kept smaller than its potential. 3 + 3a + 4
- grown for full size and natural shape. 3 + 3a

Rhododendron

- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 4
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 9

When to cut

We do much of our spring pruning just before and after April 1. You might do the same, or start a bit earlier or later.

We aim to work during that time when we're unlikely to see nighttime temperatures below 28°F, but plants have not yet broken bud. For all but slow-starting shrubs, that period comes about April 1 in our neck of the woods, zone 5 Michigan. If you're in a warmer zone or more than 100 miles south of Michigan, or if you're in a colder zone and north of mid-Michigan, you will probably do this first pruning earlier or later than we do.

Rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*)

- kept smaller than its potential. 2 or 2a + 2b, 14
 - in tree form. 2 + 2b + 2c, 14
 - grown for full size and natural shape. 3, 14
- Clip off rose of Sharon seed pods (right) to reduce seedling 'volunteers.'

Rose, hybrid tea 2 + 2b and 13; 17

Rose, shrub type or rambler / climber

3 + 3a and 13, then 4 + 4a; 17

Sandcherry (*Prunus* species) 3 + 4

Smoke bush (*Cotinus* species)

- kept smaller than its potential. 2 + 2b, 10
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a

Spicebush (*Lindera* species)

- kept smaller than its potential. 4
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a

Spirea, dwarf summer blooming type

Spiraea bumalda, *S. japonica*, *S. thunbergii* 3 or 3c

Spirea, snowmound or bridal veil

(*Spiraea vanhouttei*, *S. nipponica*, *S. prunifolia*)

- kept tightly shaped and smaller than its potential, as in a short hedge. 6 + 6a + 6b + 6c
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 9

Spruce, dwarf birdsnest, globe, etc. (*Picea* species)

- kept smaller than its potential and tightly shaped, as in a sculpted cone or ball. 12
- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 7 + 7a
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 8 + 8a + 8b

St. Johnswort (*Hypericum* species) 3 + 3a, 15 + 15a

Stephanandra (*S. incisa*) 3 + 3a or 3b; 11

Summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*)

- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 2 or 5, 14
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a

Trumpet vine (*Campsis radicans*)

- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 9 and 11

Ural false spirea (*Sorbaria sorbifolia*)

3 or 2a + 2b + 2c and 11; 14

Viburnum

- kept tightly shaped and smaller than its potential, as in a squared hedge. 6 + 6a + 6c and 10
- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 3 + 3a and 4
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 9 and 10

Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*) 3 + 3a

Weigela 3 + 3a and 4 + 4a



No one way or "right" way

There is no one right way to garden, and that includes pruning.

Follow our guide or prune when you will -- you can't be "wrong"!

If you watch what happens, then adjust your technique and timing you can accomplish almost anything with a given plant.

Willow, pussy-, purple osier, tricolor

- for maximum foliage effect and winter twig color. 2 + 2a + 2b + 2c
- for spring bloom and controlled size. 5

Wisteria vine

- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a and 16
- to modify its shape or restrict its size and still have bloom. 2 and 4

Witchhazel (*Hamamelis* species)

- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 7
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a

Yew (*Taxus* species)

- kept tightly shaped and smaller than its potential, as in a squared hedge. 6 + 6a + 6b; 17
- kept smaller than its potential but allowed a natural, loose outline. 7; 17
- grown for full size and natural shape. 1 + 1a
- has been too big for two or more years. 9

Cutting directions

1 - Cut only to remove wood that's dead, damaged, or declining. Cut when you will.

1a - While the plant is young, select permanent framework branches. In August of any year, cut out excess, awkward or weak growth while that wood is still small.

2 - Cut it back as much as you like, at least to remove dead and weak wood. Do it in early spring, preferably just before budbreak.

2a - As #2 but without restraint, even cutting all canes to the ground.

2b - For shrubs (versus vines): Harder cuts prompt mostly vertical new growth and a leaner look. If your cuts leave branches with multiple side buds, the resulting shrub will be twiggy and may be wider than tall.

2c - For shrubs trained as trees, cut back branches as you will to remove dead and weak growth, or cut harder even to leave only short stubs branches off the trunk, but do not cut the trunk.

3 - Cut to remove or seriously shorten some older canes to keep the plant full of new and middle-aged wood. Remove dead and weak wood from other canes. Prune in spring, the earlier the better, because you're trying to stimulate new growth.

3a - Canes you remove might have flowered this year, so these cuts "cost you" some bloom. However, the price is right since this plant blooms better on newer wood than old.

3b - Prune as in #3, or, cut the plant to the ground every few years in early spring so it rejuvenates all at once. Bloom & berry will be lost in that year.



Prune willows grown for colorful winter stems or variegated leaves *before* they break bud in spring. Wait to clip pussy willows until after they bloom.

3c - Prune as in #3, or, cut the plant to the ground every few years in early spring so it rejuvenates all at once. Bloom will be delayed in that year.

Remove developing seed pods when you prune *Weigela* after bloom, and new growth from below this point may bloom again that summer.

4 - After the plant's flowers peak, before mid-July, clip it to your desired height and width. Also, shorten further or remove branches that bloomed most heavily; make such cuts to below the lowest bloom on the branch. (Below developing seeds, as at right.)

4a - New growth will come from below your cuts or from the shrub base and may produce additional bloom that same season.

5 - Very soon after the plant's flowers peak, clip it to be shorter and narrower than the desired size, so that it can grow back up to that size before it blooms again next year. Then cut at least a few of the oldest limbs even further so there will be new growth low and within the plant's outline.

5a - Making these cuts will reduce the number of fruits or seed pods. This is one cost of growing a plant that wishes to be bigger than you will let it be.

6 - Cut it back hard before budbreak. Remove as many total inches of height as the plant produced last year. (If this is the first year you follow these directions and last year you sheared it repeatedly, estimate its potential growth by multiplying the times you cut by how many inches you sheared each time.) This can mean shortening a boxwood by 6 or 8 inches, a dwarf burning bush, yew or privet by one or more feet. It will leave bare wood showing. Do it. Cut harder, less often!

6a - Then, thin the plant's shell by clipping some of the remaining branches to shorten them by another year's growth. As you thin, target the thickest branches with the densest cluster of "fingers" at their tip. Thinning may leave "holes" in the surface but don't worry. Through the openings, light will reach into the plant's interior, promoting growth from within to quickly fill any gaps and keep the plant healthier and more dense.

6b - Finally, don't cut again until all soft new growth hardens, usually in early August. At that time, cut just to even out the branch tips.

6c - If this is the first time you are following these directions for a spring-blooming hedge you will lose flower. Do it anyway. The hard cuts will stimulate new growth within your outline which will develop flower buds, escape the next hard cut and be there to bloom.

7 - Wait, put up with irregularities until August, then cut for the shape or size you want. Do this by cutting back any limb that has crossed the lines you set to define its greatest acceptable height and width. Shorten each limb you cut by about two year's growth. Determine annual growth rate by looking for the differences between its current-year wood and older wood. Often, new wood has not developed bark or is a different color or texture. Cut any of that



limb's side branches, too, if their tips extend beyond the end point you just established.

7a - For juniper, arborvitae, pine and spruce, make all cuts to just above a side branch.

8 - Cut back hard, best in early spring. Cut selectively rather than simply shearing; you should not leave bare wood at any tip. Make every cut to just above a side branch that has a leafy/needled tip well within your height and width limit. Remove completely any branch that has no foliage, leafy bud or leafy side branch within your outline.

8a - Keep the plant well watered and fertilize once it begins to grow. While new growth is soft, nip the tip of any shoot that crosses your outer limits so that it will be encouraged to produce side branches further inside the outline. Begin cutting per other objectives once the plant develops some density.

8b - If the plant has none/very little foliage within your outline, or you can't abide the just-cut plant's appearance, or renewed density of leaf doesn't come within two years, replace the shrub with something better suited to the site.

9 - Cut per #6 & 6a if this is the first year you are following these directions, but cut even harder to remove how many inches it was too big *plus* one year's growth. For spring blooming plants this almost certainly means removing most of the flower buds. Do it; losing one year's bloom is worth getting the plant onto a manageable schedule.

10 - Be advised that it will sucker profusely from every stub if cut hard, especially if cut in spring. Couldn't you simply find a place to let this plant grow to its full size? If not, follow up any spring pruning with at least one mid-summer cut to shorten and/or thin the new shoots.

11 - Be aware that when cut back hard all at once in spring it will sucker especially vigorously from the stumps and often also from roots at a distance. If you would rather avoid this response, cut a portion of it back hard in August of each year until it's all new, then begin managing the new portions as desired.

12 - Best to cut while the plant is candling -- while new growth is extending itself and before that new growth changes from soft and green to woody. Shear the soft growth to remove as many inches as the plant adds each year, then clip to remove any woody, tip-less twigs. Then thin the plant's shell by clipping individual branches to shorten them by another year's growth. As you thin, target the thickest branches with the densest cluster of "fingers" at their tip. Thinning may leave "holes" in the surface but don't worry. Through the openings, light will reach into the plant's interior, promoting growth from within to quickly fill gaps and keep the plant denser and healthier.

13 - Dab cut ends with white wood glue to deter cane borers.

14 - Wood that forms this year can bloom this year.

15 - Deadhead the plant during its bloom period if you can/will

15a - This will keep new blooms coming for a longer time.

15b - This is simply to neaten appearance.

Next issue, still in time for the big cutting season: But what if...

If this issue's pruning guide doesn't answer your question, how about waiting to cut until after you read our next issue? Already lined up there are answers and explanations for the following issues. It's likely we'll add more over the next few days!

- Why many landscape care companies use pruning methods that frustrate gardeners.
- Making decisions when a new shrub reveals its true, huge nature: Variegated willow.
- Second guessing: Cut back *how far*?!
- Dealing with gangly, ugly duckling growth: Ninebark, *Viburnum* and smoke bush.
- When a major trunk must go: Tree-form rose of Sharon and panicle *Hydrangea*.
- Fattening up a vining honeysuckle.

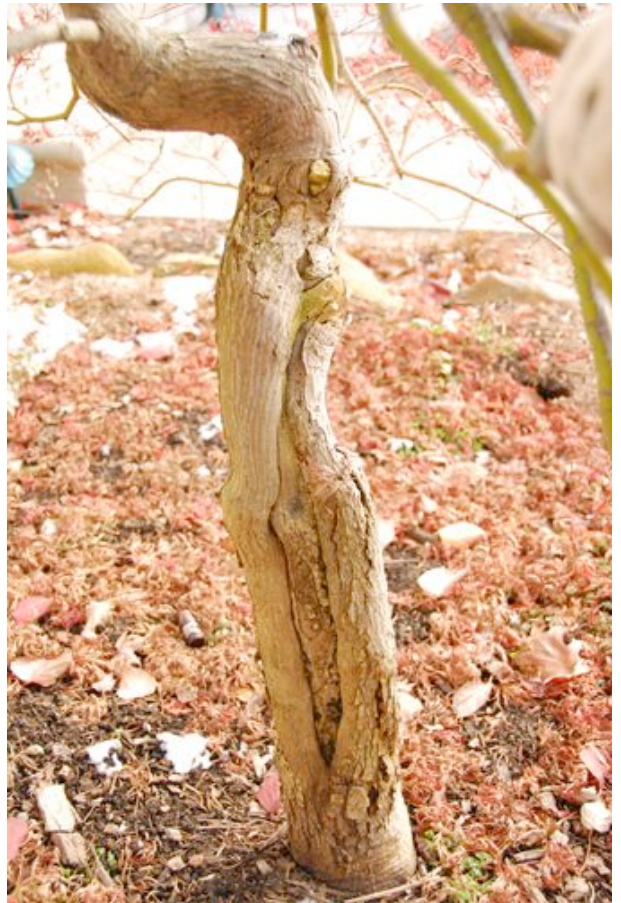
16 - In August, remove low sucker growth from roots or low on stem.

17 - You may read that cutting this plant too early in spring, in late summer, or in late fall rather than in spring is a mistake because this "stimulates new growth which will be killed back." We respectfully disagree. Someone, sometime may have seen this ill effect and hoped to spare others the loss by advising "prune only in spring." However, we have seen many plants cut at "wrong" times with no lasting damage or even any more damage than occurred to other plants not treated in that way in that year. We know we still have much to see and may someday be convinced otherwise. Nevertheless, we prefer to err on the side of human convenience even if that might sometimes create the need for plant replacement.



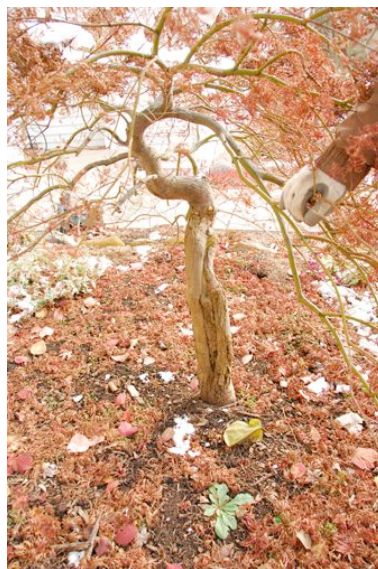
Green thumbs up to cutting flowers from **lenten rose** and other early bloomers, to display and admire indoors in a vase. Lord knows we don't look at the plants themselves nearly enough in spring, when spring clean up and pruning are the focus!

Green thumbs down to premature removal of winter protection: shade screens, mounded soil, cloth tents and other devices defending thin barked trees, tender roses, marginally hardy *Hydrangeas* and the like. What a shame to see a plant survive winter only to have new growth nipped by frost or a drastic drop in temperature one night kill the sunny side bark that warmed that day. If you can leave them until *Forsythia* blooms, do that!



Above, lenten rose (*Helleborus x orientalis*).

At right, the damaged trunk of a Japanese maple. Eventually lethal. Warm winter days made cambium cells below the thin bark on the sunny side "wake up" and fill with water. Sudden cold at sunset on those days caused those cells to burst and die. Eventually the bark cracked and peeled away. It was longer being renewed there because no living cambium cells remain in that area to produce new bark.



Who's Janet? Who's Steven?

A professional gardener and educator since 1984, Janet Macunovich has been operating for twice that many years as "**Practical Patty**," a title bestowed by her Aunt Melrose. She's helped a great many people improve their gardens and their lives by sharing her experience and knowledge in understandable terms and practical tactics. When not writing, she's designing, planting and tending gardens through her business, Perennial Favorites.



He's a guy who sees not a beautiful plant but exactly where a gardener fits into a picture. Steven Nikkila's a horticultural photographer who's also planted hundreds of gardens in dozens of different situations in running a gardening business with his wife, Janet Macunovich. That work's paired him with people whose gardening experience ranged from just sprouting to heavily branched. Steven's history of showing so many people "how to" plus his own broad knowledge of what has been or needs to be done in a garden adds to his

photos. His alterations in composition, angle or light have caused thousands of gardeners to say "Oh, I see!"

Email questions to Janet or Steven at JMaxGarden@aol.com or call 248-681-7850.

Where to catch Janet, Steven and friends* in-person:

*See "Invite Janet or Steven" on page 18.

Garden Renovation series with Janet at the **Cox Arboretum**, 6733 Springboro Pike, **Dayton, Ohio**:

Monday, **March 29**, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Cutting Back the Rambunctious Garden, for new gardeners who have plants in their garden growing bigger than they expected and for confirmed gardeners who must have it all. Basics and secrets to pruning shape plants, keep them small or cut them back to start over.

Monday, **April 12**, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Making a Four-season Landscape, how to reap four seasons of interest from your landscape. Choosing species and varieties carefully is only part of the answer, along with placing and maintaining plants and other garden features. Design steps and maintenance tips.

Monday, **April 26**, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Shade Gardens: Plant selection, design, maintenance, being smart as you plant among tree roots, and treating the soil in ways to serve both new plantings and established trees or shrubs.

For the series: \$40. To register: 937-434-9005 or copy this URL to your browser <http://bit.ly/bde6Zq>



Saturday, **April 3, 9:00 a.m. - noon**, *Garden by Janet - Bring your gloves and tools!* At the Detroit Zoo, Woodward Avenue at I-696. Your chance to volunteer at the zoo in exchange for Janet's hands-on instruction in cutting back after winter, early season weed prevention, planting and pruning. To join Janet at the zoo, email mstgarden@yahoo.com with the subject line "I'll garden at the Zoo with Janet."

Saturday, **April 3, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**, in **Macomb, Michigan**, Steven Nikkila conducts *Master Gardener Training: Woody Ornamentals* at the County Extension office. Open to current Master Gardener trainees and active Master Gardeners by arrangement with the Macomb County Master Gardener coordinator.

Thursday, **April 8, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.**, *The Ecological Gardener*. Take a look with Janet at gardening's impact on the environment and what you can do to have a positive effect. At *The Chesterfield Township Library*, 50560 Patricia Ave. Free - donations to the library accepted. Call (586) 598-4900 to reserve a seat.

Saturday, **April 10**, Janet's in **Ubly, MI**, for a symposium sponsored by the Huron County Master Gardeners for all of Michigan's "thumb." It's an all-day affair with lots of topics and speakers. Janet makes two presentations: *Gardener, Hedge Your Bets* is an explanation of hardiness with tips for selection and care that can make your plants hardier; and *Local Color*, an eye-opening approach to making more of the unique hues of your own region and garden. Call 989-269-7154 for more information or to register.

April 12: Janet's in **Dayton, OH** (see the March 29 *Renovation* series at the Cox Arboretum)

April 13: Janet's in **Madison, WI** at **Olbrich Botanical Gardens**, to explain her process for *Getting a Garden Ready for Spring* in ways that will make the whole year more beautiful. \$44 (\$35 for OBG members). For more information, call OBG at 608-246-4550 or copy this URL to your browser bar to read about classes and download a registration form: www.olbrich.org/education/classes.cfm#workshops

Saturday, **April 17:** Janet's in the center of Michigan's mitt in **Mt. Pleasant** as part of the *Spring Into Gardening* conference hosted by the Isabella County Master Gardeners. Janet's topics are *Perennials in the Landscape* and *Design Tips: Using Garden Art*. \$50. For more information or to register copy this URL to your browser isabellacounty.org/dept/msue/flyers/2010%20Brochure.pdf

April 20: Steven's in **West Branch, MI** at the Forward Conference Center. In this *A Garden Affair: Four Seasons of Gardening* sponsored by the Ogemaw County Master Gardeners, Steven's part is to help you have *Winter Interest in the Garden*. \$45 (\$55 after April 1). For more information contact Lora at freerl@msu.edu or 989-345-0692 or copy this URL to your browser msue.msu.edu/portal/default.cfm?pageset_id=28398&page_id=117780&msue_portal_id=25643

Other dates and events coming up:

April 20: Janet's in **Hartland, MI** at the Cromaine District Library

April 22: Janet's in **Gladwin, MI** at a Master Gardeners' community educational event

April 24: Janet's in **Macomb, MI** for Master Gardener Training: *Flowers*

April 24: Janet and Steven are in **Macomb, MI** at Ray Wiegand's Nursery

April 25: Janet's in **Plymouth, MI** at Plymouth Nursery

April 26 Janet's in **Dayton, OH** (see March 29 *Renovation* series)

May 1: Janet's in **Saginaw, MI** at Abele Greenhouses

May 15: Steven's at the **Detroit Zoo**

May 15: Janet's in **Northville, MI** at Gardenviews Store's new location.

May 19: Janet's in **Detroit, MI** at the Indian Village Men's Garden Club meeting.

May 22: Janet's in **Oak Park, MI** at Four Seasons Garden Center along with Pam Palechek

May 29: Steven's in **Oak Park, MI** at Four Seasons Garden Center

And even more, throughout spring and summer. Details will be posted here soon. If you need information, email JMaxGarden@aol.com.

About attending *Garden by Janet* sessions:

We're let-me-see, hands-on people. That's how we learn best. From time to time there are *Garden by Janet* sessions listed here to afford you that kind of chance to grow. You visit us where we're working to either watch or work with Janet. Generally, there is no charge and we're in one of two kinds of locations:

1) At the **gardens we tend through our business, Perennial Favorites**: Our clients understand our enthusiasm for teaching. Some open their gardens to small groups who want to see and practice "how to." When the work we're scheduled to do may be of interest to you, we invite you in.

2) In the **Detroit Zoo, Adopt-A-Garden** program where we're 22-year veterans. Many people have worked with us there, some for a day and others for years. We have fun, we learn, we accomplish much. You can check out this program by coming in as our student on a temporary pass. **To join Janet at the Zoo**, email mstgarden@yahoo.com with the subject line of your email "Help at zoo."

Invite Janet or Steven or their expert friends to your club or community.

We go where we're invited! That's taken us all over the country and then some over the past 20 years. We address many topics, drawing from our list of **100+ talks**. We also continue to expand our horizons by developing new material or "hybridizing" from what we already have.

So, we're game, whether it's...

- a **how-to lesson for a garden club**,
- a **hands-on, on-site workshop**, or
- a **multi-part class** for a group,

We can also connect you to one or a whole line-up of other experts who know how to explain how-to. So give us a **call or send an email** to make a date, request our list of classes and talks or get a referral. **JMaxGarden@aol.com or 248-681-7850**. Our calendars fill six months to a year in advance, so give us some lead time. Then we can meet you in *your* garden.

Time to garden your walls...

Steven's decorated many walls with great garden images. He can help you do the same.

Any of Steven's images from *What's Coming Up*, such as this monarch butterfly beating a hummingbird to the bloom (below) or an anole hunting aphids (bottom, right) can be made just for your wall. His photos capture garden beauty and stories you love. Plus, there is so much clear detail in these images that they can be enlarged to several feet square and still be crystal clear.



Have an image in mind that you haven't seen in these newsletters? You can request an image of a particular flower or type of scene and Steven will assemble a customized photo sampler for you. Email us at JMaxGarden@aol.com for details, to request a sampler or to place an order.



Prices depend on your choices in format and size. For example:

An 8 x 10" image
matted in an 11 x 14.5" frame,
\$48.00

A 36 x 48" image
on museum-grade cloth*
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*Janet's favorite: "I can change our display by just rolling up one photo tapestry and unrolling another."

You asked for our advice "on paper". We wrote and sell these books plus CDs:

Designing Your Gardens and Landscape

First published in 1990 as *Easy Garden Design*, a 150-page step-by-step recipe that's become a design classic. Janet developed, uses and has trained thousands of others to use this process. People say: "This is exactly the simple, clear approach I need!" This design process is applicable world-wide.

Soft cover, spiral bound. B&W illustrations by Janet. \$19.00

Caring for Perennials

Janet's unique approach to perennial care how-to, the real-time story of one bed from early spring to season's end. The 180 engaging and fact-filled pages make you part of all Janet does and you might ever need to do in each task's appropriate season and sequence. Includes a chart of what to do, when for 70 top perennials. Advice in this book is applicable in all of temperate U.S. and Canada. The perennial chart includes a key to adapt its timing for far southern or northern edges of that range.

Soft cover book. Color illustrations by Steven Nikkila. \$20.00



Asking About Asters CD.

A digital library of six years of Janet's work: weekly columns, newsletters and over 200 extra Q&A letters to individual gardeners. 1,681 questions answered about soil preparation, fertilizing, pruning, design, choosing plants, foiling bugs and much more. No repeated topics. Fully indexed; the entire collection can be searched from this one file.

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Potting Up Perennials CD. New for 2010

A digital collection of 2009's *What's Coming Up*: 52 issues, over 750 pages with more than 150 articles, 500 images and 250 quick-look lists and reports. Includes a comprehensive index of this collection plus Janet's previously-released digital library, *Asking About Asters*. If you own both *Potting Up Perennials* and *Asking about Asters* you can search all the *What's Coming Up* newsletters plus six years of *Growing Concerns* columns and books from this new index.

Bonus on this CD: Steven Nikkila's Daydream Screen Saver, 74 of his most vivid works from gardens and nature.

1 CD in jewel case, Windows- and Mac compatible. \$15.00

Janet's complete digital library New for 2010

Set of two CDs: *Asking About Asters* and *Potting Up Perennials*. \$30.00



Janet and Steven give you: Trees. New for 2010*

A choice collection of Janet and Steven's advice for tree selection, planting and care. Each article made its debut in *Michigan Gardener* magazine and has been on hold since, awaiting completion of its fellows until this comprehensive compilation became possible. Topics include: Selecting trees; fall color; what's happening to ash trees; replacing a big tree; descriptions, lists and photos of great trees; why starting small is a good idea when planting; planting how-to, why's and why not's; staking, watering and fertilizing; mulching; rescuing a tree from the lawn; preventing construction damage; pruning to keep trees and shrubs small; removing suckers; detecting girdling roots; and dealing with maple tar spot and lecanium scale.

10" x 13" magazine, 48 pages. Color illustrations. \$12.00

New for 2010* Janet and Steven give you: Landscape Ideas.

Janet and Steven's favorite articles on landscape design and renovation: Designing with foliage color; covering up after the bulb season; doubling up perennials for 3-season color; shady solutions; using usual plants in unusual ways; designing hypo-allergenic gardens; Murphy's Laws applied to gardens; renovation how-to; fragrant plants and designs; attracting wildlife; rockwork; invasive plants; discovering a site's hidden assets; using herbs in a landscape; and how to cheat to improve a garden quickly. These articles appeared first in *Michigan Gardener* magazine individually between 1999 and 2010. Now they're collected in this set for your design library.

10" x 13" magazine, 48 pages. Color illustrations. \$12.00



Janet and Steven give you: Garden Care. New for 2010*

Vital how-to for tending a garden, from Janet and Steven's favorite articles on: bed preparation; soil testing; making a weed-free bed; spring start-up; improving hard-packed soil; fertilizing; watering; cutting back and deadheading; repairing irrigation; drought-tolerant plants; sharpening tools; tweaking in summer; staking; and the art of fall garden clean up. Items in this collection were selected from among Janet and Steven's ten years of *Michigan Gardener* articles. Each made its debut in that magazine, waited for its companion pieces and now they all join your library in this more durable and comprehensive form.

10" x 13" magazine, 48 pages. Color illustrations. \$12.00



Janet and Steven give you: Trees, Landscape Ideas and Garden Care New for 2010*

Set of three 10" x 13" magazines, 48 pages each. \$30.00

***For a look inside, email JMaxGarden@aol.com with the subject line "Magazine peek."**

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