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**Pruning Important in Maintaining Tree Health**  
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Trees are valuable resources for urban and rural dwellers alike. They reduce heating and cooling costs by providing shade and windbreak, increase land value, provide wildlife habitat, provide protection for livestock, slow soil erosion by wind and water, and take excess carbon dioxide out of the air and in turn release oxygen. The Kay County Conservation District would like to pass along some helpful pruning tips and techniques to keep our trees healthy.

Pruning is necessary to train and maintain trees in a strong and healthy condition, to repair damage from storms, clear utility lines, and invigorate trees. The most important time to start pruning is when the trees are young. The basic tools needed by homeowners are loppers, hand-pruning shears with bypass blades, a folding saw, bow saw and leather gloves. Use high quality sharp tools. Use hand shears for limbs up to 1/4" in diameter, loppers for cuts up to one inch in diameter, and saws for cuts over one inch in diameter.

The single most important factor is knowing what time of the year to prune different species of trees. Trees and shrubs that flower before the end of June should be pruned immediately after flowering. Examples are azalea, hawthorn, forsythia, redbud, flowering cherry or plum, honeysuckle, and mountain ash. Trees that flower after June should be pruned in the winter or spring before new growth begins. Some deciduous trees known as "bleeders" such as maple, birch, dogwood, elm and walnut should be pruned in the summer or fall to prevent excess loss of sap.

First begin pruning by removing all dead, diseased, crossing and/or broken branches. To ensure an open center for air circulation, remove branches growing toward the center. Prune back to a bud growing toward the outside of the tree. Encourage growth of branches with large crotch angles, at least 60 degrees. Never remove more than one-third of the branching system of any tree or two-thirds of any shrub or vine in one year. Dehorning or topping a tree is not a recommended pruning technique. Dehorning a tree substantially shortens the life of a tree because the stubs that are left cannot heal quickly because of the large surface area of the wound and are more susceptible to diseases and insects. Regrowth after dehorning results in narrow crotch angles, which split easily in wind or ice storms. Broadleaved evergreens should be pruned just before new growth starts in the spring. Pines may be pruned by removing up to one-half of the candle or new growth. Shearing or pruning after the candle or new growth stage may result in death of the tree because new terminal buds may not be formed. Avoid pruning from August 15 through October 15 or the first killing frost. Pruning at this time of the year encourages new

growth, which will not be hardened off before winter, and therefore will increase the danger of winter damage, especially broadleaf evergreens.

Not only are correct pruning techniques important to promote tree health, but also the initial selection of the particular tree species is important in improving the chances of survival. Initial selection factors include plant hardiness zone, exposure, mature size and soil type.

For insect control on trees and shrubs consult the OSU Extension Fact Sheet EPP-7306. If you saw indications of gall insects on oaks last year, control should be applied as buds swell, and again at bud break and when the leaves are at the half leaf stage.

For more information on choosing or caring for trees contact the Kay County Conservation District Office, 5501 N Pleasant View Ave, in Newkirk or call 580-362-2438.

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