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## 'Tis the season for prudent pruning

Spring training is long over for the Tigers, but shaping up landscape plants should just be beginning.

Spring-flowering shrubs and trees should be pruned after they flower. Harold Davidson, horticulture specialist at Michigan State University, explained that these plants go into winter bearing the buds for next spring's flowers. Pruning in winter or early spring removes the buds and prevents flowering.

Some trees — including maples, dogwoods and American yellow wood — should be pruned in the early summer. If pruned in the winter or spring, these trees will bleed sap from pruning cuts. Although this does not harm them, it does mar their appearance.

Most other landscape plants can benefit from a spring shapeup that removes dead and diseased branches and stems and improves their basic structure.

Dead, diseased or broken branches should be removed from a plant as soon as you are aware of them, Davidson advises. Dead, diseased or damaged tissue provides a foothold for fungi and other disease organisms and insects that may swiftly move into healthy wood.

Prune young trees with an eye toward preventing structural problems later. Candidates for removal are branches that cross and rub one another, branches that join the main stem at sharp, V-

shaped angles. V-shaped crotches are weaker than U-shaped or right-angles, Davidson said, and are more likely to split under a load of snow or ice, or break in a high wind than branches that join the main stem at a wider angle.

REMAINING BRANCHES should be more or less evenly spaced around the main trunk for a strong, attractive, balanced framework.

This type of pruning gets young trees off to a good start. Pruning can also be used to revitalize older plants, particularly shrubs. Rejuvenate overgrown deciduous shrubs by removing older stems at ground level. Do this over two or three years, leaving young, vigorous growth to take over.

Pruning to control the size of landscape plants must be done carefully to maintain the natural shape of the plant. Davidson advises pruning cautiously at all times.

"You can always cut off a little more, but you can't put something back once you've taken it off."

Make all pruning cuts with sharp tools. Dull tools make ragged cuts that are slow to heal and may allow disease and decayed organisms to enter.

Prune large tree limbs by making three cuts. Make the first small cut on the underside of the branch a few inches away

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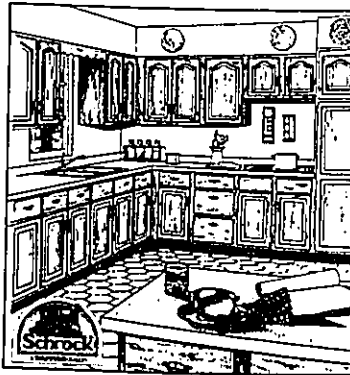
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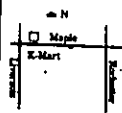
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