

Branch out: Plant a tree for Arbor Day

Arbor Day is Friday, April 26, a good time to choose and plant a tree to commemorate the occasion.

The Michigan Forestry and Park Association Inc. Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture Inc. gives the following advice about planting a tree correctly:

- Prepare the hole correctly. Dig it two to three times the width of the root ball; make the sides slant gradually outward. Don't dig deeper than root ball depth.

- For bare-root trees, neatly cut away any broken or damaged roots. Soak them for a few hours prior to planting to allow them to absorb water.

- Container-grown trees should have the plastic or metal containers completely removed. Carefully cut

GARDEN SPOT



MARTY FIGLEY

through any circling roots. Remove the top half of pressed peat/paper containers. Balled and burlapped trees should have all the ropes cut. Pull the burlap at least 1/3 of the way down; slit remaining burlap to encourage root growth. If a tree is in a wire basket, cut away the top

of the basket. ■ Gently place the tree in the hole. Partially back fill with the soil from the hole. Water to settle the soil, then finish back filling the hole. Stamp the soil gently, but don't step on the root ball.

- Remove tags and labels. ■ Don't stake the tree unless it has a large crown, or if the planting is on a site where wind or people may push it over. Stake for a maximum of one year.

- Prune only damaged branches. Soak soil well, making sure no air pockets form between roots. Be sure tree has plenty of water throughout the year. Wait until next year to fertilize.

- Spread 2 to 3 inches of mulch over the planting area. Don't place it up against the trunk.

For additional information on planting and other tree care topics, contact the MFPA at (517) 482-5530. Or e-mail ahshy.ann@ued.net, or visit the Web site at <http://forestry.msu.edu/mfpa/index.htm>.

Roses

Now that the tree is planted, you can zero in on another chore that should be done this month.

George Hartley (The Buckeye Rosearian), the Great Lakes District director of the American Rose Society, shares the following advice about spring rose care.

With the fickle weather of April, Hartley advises it's best to be sure the roses won't suffer damage from a cold spell, so don't be in a hurry to remove the mulch and prune. Prune when you unhill the plants.

Start by going through your entire garden and cut out all the canes that show signs of winter damage or dieback. Also remove all twiggy growth smaller in diameter than a lead pencil. This will allow more space to get in around the bush for later chores.

"When leaf buds are about a quarter of an inch and temperatures don't go below 30 degrees is the time to go back and do your real pruning - note I didn't say 'final pruning' since pruning is done all through the growing season," Hartley said.

In your April pruning, always cut the canes back to a point where the center of the pith is a good, healthy white or light cream color. This healthy wood contains the carbohydrates of the bush, or the "building blocks" of the plants.

When pruning back to white healthy wood it might be necessary to cut back to a bud union or within a few inches.

After you've cut back to healthy wood, make a final slanting cut about 1/4-inch above the uppermost good, healthy leaf bud or eye. Seal the open ends with orange shellac or Elmer's glue, which aids healing and keeps out the cane borer insects.

Apply your first application of fertilizer now and be sure to water the beds the day before fertilizing.

GOOD GARDEN TIP

There are just a few more days to have your soil tested through Michigan State University, in cooperation with

Please see GARDEN, C4

Lovely settings



PHOTOS BY S. KAY YOUNG

A winter fantasy: The sparkling table settings were just part of this glittery, snowy winter fantasy reception at the Ritz Carlton in Dearborn, planned by wedding planner Carolyn Hefner of Birmingham.

Table decor adds sparkle, personal style to wedding receptions



Spectacular: At their "winter fantasy" reception, Amy Gatewood and Kyle Buckle sat at a two-person table adorned with special items, including two silver antique candlesticks from the bride's grandmother, and "table number one" displayed in an ornate silver frame.

The wedding reception is the first and most important party the married couple will host and it is meant to impress and tell everyone who you are," states wedding planner Carolyn Hefner, of the China Closet in Birmingham. "Table settings are part of the 'wow' as guests enter the wedding reception, but they need to be more than just eye candy. Table settings should be beautiful, functional and help make guests feel very special. They are what I call tablescapes, or landscapes of color, flowers and decorations on a table."

According to Hefner, the invitation sets the style, whether formal or casual. The style can then be translated into a tablescape that compliments the party.

A winter fantasy

A spectacular wedding Hefner recently planned at the Ritz Carlton in Dearborn for Amy Gatewood and Kyle Buckle had the overall vision of a winter fantasy. She personally designed the invitations first, then searched for decorations, colors, flowers and lights that would convey the feeling of a glittery, snowy winter fantasy. Imagine faux snow and ivory rose petals on a dais with the bride and groom seated in the center of the room at a small two-person table with a snowy path leading to their place of honor. Dendrobium orchids dangled from the ceiling over the table like snowflakes poised in the air.

On the table was a duplicate of the top layer of their cake made to look like a present and two silver antique candlesticks from the bride's grandmother. The two taper candles were the only ones used in the room. There was also a butter mold in the shape of a Calla Lily and "table number one" was displayed in an ornate tiny silver frame.

Picture it

Karen Copus, a wedding and party planner, artist and antique dealer located in Lathrup Village suggests brides-to-be cut out pictures of settings, colors and ideas that they like. This helps her understand their style preferences. Even though the pictures may have dissimilar ideas, they convey a consistent tone of formal or casual, traditional or free-spirited.

The details are what counts. There are several elements to plan for table settings such as linens, flowers, favors, crystal,

Please see WEDDING, C2

By Sandie Parrott ♦ Special Writer

How to find, and work with a contractor

ASK DAD



HARRY JACHYM

It would be nice if finding a contractor was as easy as opening the Yellow Pages. Unfortunately it isn't. I've found word of mouth is the usually the best way to find a contractor. Ask friends, family or coworkers to recommend contractors who've done work for them.

An important question to ask is - would you have them do work on your home again?

It's definitely best to get at least three quotes for any project. You'll find that there may be vast price differences between builders for the same job. Don't be afraid to ask for an explanation of these differences. The cheapest (or most expensive) contractors are not necessarily the best choice. Don't forget to get and verify references.

Look at the license

Ask to see a copy of the copy of the contractor's license and their certificates of insurance before making your final selection. A homeowner is responsible for payment to subcontractors or vendors who were not paid by the contractor. Licensed contractors in Michigan pay into the construction lien recovery fund. This money is used to compensate the homeowner who has a lien put on their property by an unpaid subcontractor or supplier. Further, you can be held responsible for an injured

employee or damage to a neighbor's property if the contractor doesn't have proper protection.

Be leery of contractors who solicit door to door, accept only cash payment, require all the money up front, asks you to get the permits, suggests you borrow money from a lender they know, pressures you for an immediate decision, has no permanent street address or phone number.

Most important, don't sign on with any one you are not entirely comfortable with. You have the right to get out of a contract within three business days; but money paid up front

Please see CONTRACTOR, C2