

2001 RUTGERS Turfgrass Proceedings



THE NEW JERSEY TURFGRASS ASSOCIATION

In Cooperation With

RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
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2001 RUTGERS TURFGRASS PROCEEDINGS

of the

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The Rutgers Turfgrass Proceedings is published yearly by the Rutgers Center for Turfgrass Science, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, Cook College, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey in cooperation with the New Jersey Turfgrass Association. The purpose of this document is to provide a forum for the dissemination of information and the exchange of ideas and knowledge. The proceedings provide turfgrass managers, research scientists, extension specialists, and industry personnel with opportunities to communicate with co-workers. Through this forum, these professionals also reach a more general audience, which includes the public.

This publication includes lecture notes of papers presented at the 2001 New Jersey Turfgrass Expo. Publication of these lectures provides a readily available source of information covering a wide range of topics and includes technical and popular presentations of importance to the turfgrass industry.

This proceedings also includes research papers that contain original research findings and reviews of selected subjects in turfgrass science. These papers are presented primarily to facilitate the timely dissemination of original turfgrass research for use by the turfgrass industry.

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Dr. Ann Brooks Gould, Editor
Dr. Bruce B. Clarke, Coordinator

PRUNING TECHNIQUES: THE MYSTERIOUS ART

Bruce Hamilton¹

Good design, quality construction, and sustaining, sensitive maintenance are essential for a developing landscape to its full potential. Pruning is the horticultural technique that requires the most sensitive application. Good pruning literally shapes the future of the landscape.

Examples of “Professional Plant Butchery”:

- Shearing evergreens into “green meatballs”
- Decapitating conical trees such as American holly
- Removing limbs and leaving stubs on decay-sensitive trees
- Severing roots of large established trees

REASONS FOR PRUNING

Sanitation – removing dead or diseased wood. (If diseased, tools should be dipped in 10% bleach solution.)

Rejuvenation – removal of old inefficient branches.

Height control – selective shortening of upright branches of small trees and shrubs.

Balance – tops of plants should be reduced when roots are damaged during transplanting or construction. Roots should be pruned prior to transplanting and after severe top pruning.

Special effects – hedges, espalier, topiary, and bonsai.

PRUNING SHRUBS

Three rules for flowering shrubs:

1. Prune when the shears are sharp. A good rule, but heavy pruning should not be done during August and September.
2. Major pruning should be done during the dormant season. Summer blooming shrubs can be pruned back to the ground and still bloom.
3. Only prune after flowering. New foliage hides the problems. This rule applies only to broadleaf evergreens such as rhododendrons and azaleas.
4. Old darkened twigs should be removed in March from red twig and yellow twig dogwoods.

PRUNING SMALL TREES

March pruning:

- Remove sucker shoots or the understock will overpower the desirable cultivar.
- Eliminate crossing and rubbing branches.

Summer pruning:

- Early June pruning slows rampant growth and gives a sense of order to the landscape.

PRUNING SHADE TREES

Hire a CTE (Certified Tree Expert) arborist with insurance and good recommendations.

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PRUNING EVERGREENS

1. Strong central leader evergreens such as spruces cannot be pruned. Top removal will destroy the form. Removal of bottom branches leaves a cone on a stick.
2. The height of multileader or shrub scale evergreens can be controlled with annual pruning.
3. Yews, spreading junipers, and hollies can successfully be severely pruned and restored to proper scale.

PRUNING FOR SPECIAL EFFECTS

Hedges – many plants can be successfully pruned as hedges. They should be wide at the bottom and narrow at the top.

Espalier – plants trained to two dimensions, height and width. Espaliers can be formal, informal, and free standing.

Topiary – pruning plants to a geometric or animal form. (Dates back to Roman times.)

Bonsai – a Chinese art form (perfected by the Japanese) of dwarfing plants in containers through root and top pruning.