Acreage Living

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Acreage Living is published bimonthly. Please share it with your acreage neighbors. Call your local ISU Extension Office to be placed on the mailing list or contact an ISU Extension staff member listed below to suggest topics for future articles.

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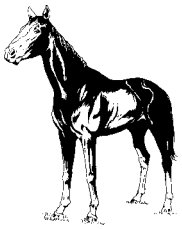
Is it time to trim your horse's hooves?

by Dale Miller, Marion County Extension Education Director



You may have heard the old saying, "No hoof, no horse!"

There is a lot of truth in those words. Most horses should have their hooves trimmed every six to eight weeks depending on growth. If you do not show your horse or use it for work, you can usually trim or shoe every eight to 10 weeks. However, any corrective trimming and lameness problems should be handled promptly and are a priority if you want a healthy horse.

A trained person who can trim hooves and correctly shoe a horse is called a farrier. When you need a qualified farrier, a good source of information is the American Farrier's Association (AFA). The association's goal is to link horse owners to competent, reliable farriers.

You can contact the AFA at (859) 233-7411 or at www.americanfarriers.org. The AFA's certification program was developed to set a standard for proper trimming and shoeing. The program tests for anatomy and physiology comprehension and hands-on competency. Present levels of examination are Intern Classification, Certified Farrier, and Certified Journeyman Farrier. Currently, there are approximately 25 AFA member farriers in Iowa. The association also has educational articles about hoof care on its Web site.

Good hoof care and hoof health is important year round. Don't make matters worse for your horse by waiting too long to call your farrier.

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Obtaining necessary zoning permits facilitates construction or changes in land, building use

By Dave Andrews, Story County Extension Education Director

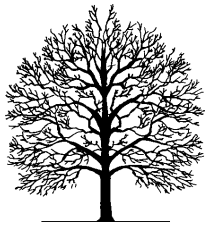
"I thought I didn't need a construction permit if I lived in the country" is a common statement heard in county planning and zoning offices. Actually, a zoning permit is often required for non-agricultural construction or change in land or building use. Even adding a portable structure may require a permit, and setbacks from property lines. Permit requirements may vary from county to county, so check with your local county planning and zoning office.

The person applying for the zoning permit must be the property owner, the contract buyer of record, or someone acting as the property owner's agent (approved by the property owner *in writing*). At the time it is submitted, the zoning permit application must include all pertinent information for the proposed construction, along with a site plan and the required fee. The site plan should include the perimeters of the property, existing buildings, and the location of the proposed structure and its distance from each property line. It is also helpful to include the property owner's name, address, and parcel identification.

Once the application and site plan are submitted, they are reviewed to be sure the proposed construction conforms to the county zoning ordinance. This means the setback from property lines is adequate, the use is appropriate for the zoning district, and the proposed structure is not located in a floodway. While construction can't occur in a floodway, it is possible in floodplain areas if floodplain requirements are met. If the applicant can meet the criteria for a Farm Exemption Certificate, the zoning permit is not required; check with your county planning and zoning office.

If the proposed project meets the ordinance requirements, a preliminary development permit will be issued. The permit allows construction to begin but not to progress past the foundation location inspection. This is done when the footings are formed but prior to pouring concrete. Fines will be incurred if the applicant does not obtain this inspection. For pole buildings, the inspection is done once the post holes are dug but prior to the structure being erected. After inspection is completed, the final zoning permit is issued.

You can find a phone number and address for your county planning and zoning department in the white pages of your phone book in the community where the courthouse is located.



Tree selection: The right tree in the right place *(continued)*

By Eldon Everhart, ISU Extension Horticulturist

Site Conditions: Selecting a tree that will thrive in the site is the key to long-term tree survival. Site conditions include soil conditions, exposure (sun and wind), human activity, surface and internal soil drainage, space constraints, and hardiness zone.

Soil Conditions: The amount and quality of soil on your site can limit planting success. On many building sites, the topsoil is frequently shallow and/or compacted. These conditions cause trees to be under stress.

You can locate your property on a map in the Soil Survey for your county. The survey contains descriptions of the type of soil on your site. Soil Surveys are available at your local library, county ISU Extension office, and the USDA NRCS office. Local ISU Extension offices and many garden centers will (for a minor charge) conduct a soil test of your soil. Samples are tested for fertility and pH (alkalinity or

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acidity). Tests will be returned with recommendations on ways to improve poor soil conditions with fertilizers or soil amendments (sand, peat moss, compost, or manure).

Exposure: The amount of sunlight available will affect tree selection. Most woody plants require full sunlight for proper growth and flowering. Some do well in light shade, but few tree species perform well in dense shade. Exposure to wind is also a consideration. Special maintenance such as staking or more frequent watering may be needed to establish young trees on windy sites.

Human Activity: People account for the top five reasons for tree death. Soil compaction, under watering, over watering, vandalism, and the number one cause, planting the wrong tree, accounts for more tree deaths than all insect and disease-related tree deaths combined.

Drainage: Tree roots require oxygen to develop and thrive. Poor drainage and/or compacted soil can prevent oxygen from getting to the roots. This can injure or kill the tree. Before planting, dig some test holes 6 to 12 inches wide and 12 inches deep in the areas where you are considering planting trees. Fill the holes with water and time how long it takes the water to drain away. If it takes more than six hours, you may have a drainage problem. If this is true, ask your local garden center, nursery, or ISU Extension office for recommendations on how to correct the problem or choose a different site.

Space Constraints: Factors that limit the space available to the tree include overhead or underground utilities, pavement, buildings, other trees, and visibility. Make sure there is adequate room for the tree you select to grow to maturity, both above and below ground.

Hardiness: Trees you select must have the ability to survive in the extreme temperatures in your area of the state. Most tree reference books and publications include the USDA plant hardiness zone map. Check with your local garden center or ISU Extension office for the hardiness information for your part of the state. Before you make your final decision, make sure the plant you have selected is "hardy" in your area.

Pest Problems: Every tree has its particular pest problems and the severity varies geographically. These may or may not be life threatening to the plant. Select trees that tolerate pest problems in your area. Your local nursery, garden center, or ISU Extension office can direct you to information relevant to problem tree species.

Species Selection: Personal preferences play a major role in the selection process. Make sure you use the information you have gathered about your site conditions, and balance them with the aesthetic decisions you make related to your personal preferences.

If you are having difficulty answering any of these questions on your own, contact your local garden center, nursery, or county ISU Extension office for assistance. It is better to get them involved early and make the right decision, to avoid having to call them later and find out that you made the wrong decision.

Tips for spring and summer bird feeding

by Ann Burns, Jackson County Conservation Naturalist

Bright cardinals, busy chickadees, and upside-down nuthatches are the delight of winter bird feeding. Have you thought about extending that enjoyment into the warmer months?

Expanding the menu selection in spring and summer will add the colors and songs of Baltimore orioles, hummingbirds, and catbirds to your yard. Orioles use nectar feeders, as do ruby-throated hummingbirds. Orioles need a larger perch to stand on because they do not hover like the diminutive hummers.

You can purchase hummingbird mixes at many discount and

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specialty yard stores. You also can make economical nectar yourself. Add one part cane sugar to four parts boiling water. Let the mix cool before filling the feeders. Red food coloring is unnecessary because most bird feeders have red feeding tubes or holes. Do not use honey; it spoils easily.

Orioles also will feed on orange halves and grape jelly. Cut the oranges in half, and then pierce them on long nails driven through a piece of wood. Hang or place the wooden platform where you can see the birds from a window.

Orioles also will eat grape jelly. A co-worker, who is a dedicated bird feeder, found that orioles are attracted to the bright oranges first, but switch to the grape jelly as soon as they find it. His tips for feeding grape jelly include transferring the jelly into a large squeeze bottle so you won't have to wash a spoon every time you use it. His jelly feeder consists of a piece of clear Plexiglas® with a hole cut in the middle. A purchased dish with a flared rim sits in the center hole. Four small holes on the edges of the Plexiglas® are used to hang the feeder with wire from a clothesline pole or tree branch.

Grape jelly and orange halves also will attract catbirds, red-bellied woodpeckers, robins, house finches, and other birds. A few less welcome guests such as bees, wasps, and ants may show up, too. Avoid placing sweet feeders near doors or sidewalks that you regularly pass as you use your yard. If bees or wasps become a major problem, hang a bottle half filled with sugar water away from your feeders. A small hole cut in the bottle lets the wasps and bees in, but they don't easily find their way out. Commercial deterrents are available for ants.

Spring and summer feeding requires more diligence in keeping feeders clean. Sugar water solutions will spoil within two or three days. Only fill nectar feeders with what the birds will consume in that timeframe.

Regularly clean your nectar, jelly, and orange feeders by soaking them in a diluted chlorine bleach solution for one hour. Allow the feeders to completely dry before refilling. My co-worker has several of his jelly dishes on hand. This allows him to have one in the feeder, one in the dishwasher, and one on standby.

For more information about bird feeding, contact your local county conservation board or nature center. Information also is available at these Web sites, www.birdwatchersdigest.com www.birds.cornell.edu.

The common ant – friend or foe?

by Bill Denton, Dallas County Master Gardener

Ants are social insects that live in colonies. Each has a different job. The queen lays eggs, which hatch into white, grub-like larvae and later develop into pupae. There also are worker ants that secure food and water. These ants often are seen far from their colony. Mature ant colonies produce many winged individuals known as swarmers. Their job is to mate and establish new colonies.

Most ants prefer to build their nests outdoors in the soil or in wood. They go inside homes only in search of food or water. There are some species, however, that build nests within structures, usually in hollow spaces behind walls, cracks beneath floors, and structural wood.

Ants move almost as much soil as earthworms. They loosen soil and cause increased air and water movement in the ground. Ants also clean up dead insect carcasses and aid in the decomposition of plant and animal matter. They are also known to carry bits of plant and animal matter through the ecosystem. Ants are among the leading predators of other insects and help control pest populations.

The downside of ants is that they are found in our homes and may establish unsightly or harmful mounds in our lawns, pastures, or fencerows. Large mounds may smother out grass and make lawns rough and uneven.

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The key to controlling ants is to eliminate the queen and other members within the nest. This often takes time and patience. Level the mound with a rake and then spray or dust with an insecticide labeled for ants. If a dust is used, rake lightly again and sprinkle with water. This procedure can be repeated as necessary.

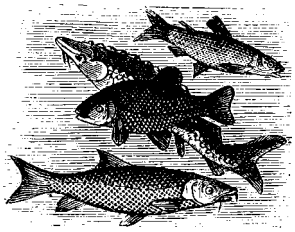
When choosing a pesticide to use indoors make sure the product is labeled for inside use. Never spray near food or on surfaces where food is prepared. Spraying a 3- to 6-foot swath along the ground next to the foundation of the house and a 2- to 3-foot band on the foundation wall may help control ant invasion.

Information for this article came from the Web sites listed below. They contain information you may find useful.

www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews
www.uky.edu/Agriculture/Entomology/entfacts/struct/ef619.htm
www.agcom.purdue.edu/AgCom/Pubs/index.html

Follow these tips for stocking farm ponds

By Joe Morris, ISU Extension Aquaculture Specialist



Iowa has more than 80,000 ponds. Many pond owners use them for both recreation and food production. Because of Iowa's varied terrain, the southern portion of the state has the most ponds.

Certain species for stocking ponds are available from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) if the pond meets the following criteria:

- New or renovated to be free of fish
- Surface area of at least one-half acre
- Maximum depth of at least 8 feet
- Fenced to exclude livestock with a 60-foot minimum buffer between pond edge and fence

Fish also are sold by several private hatcheries. ISU Extension and DNR personnel have a list of private hatcheries in Iowa.

Stocking Rates and Times

The DNR uses a split stocking approach for farm ponds. In ponds free of fish, bluegill (sunfish) and channel catfish fingerlings are stocked in the fall, and largemouth bass are stocked the following spring. This approach allows the bluegill population to become established before the predator population of largemouth bass. Bluegills are stocked at 750 to 1,000 fingerlings, 1 to 2 inches each, per surface acre. Largemouth bass are stocked at 70 fingerlings, 1 to 2 inches each, per surface acre. Channel catfish fingerlings are stocked at 100 per surface acre.

The DNR, however, doesn't provide fish for stocking ponds with an existing fish population. To stock channel catfish in ponds with an established bass population, the landowner must purchase fish from a private source. Only catfish longer than 8 inches should be stocked or the bass will eat them.

Other Species

Walleye and northern pike can be stocked in farm ponds but must be added periodically if the population is to be maintained. Walleye seldom grow large in ponds, but northerns can become large and could feed upon largemouth bass. Stocking crappie in small ponds is not recommended as it can result in a large population of small, stunted fish that competes directly with largemouth bass. Bullheads, though popular with Iowa anglers, should not be stocked into ponds. Bullheads will overpopulate and grow slowly in ponds with a limited bass population.

In addition, grass carp are sometimes stocked to control aquatic vegetation, some of which is needed in a pond. Grass carp control rooted plants much more than algae. They are stocked at four to five 8-inch fish per surface acre of water. Because the fish do not reproduce in ponds and have low natural mortality, the landowner will not need to restock for 8-10 years. Several private fish hatcheries in Iowa sell grass carp.