



# Acreage Answers

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## Pruning Young Landscape Trees

*By Chris Feeley, Extension Forestry Program Specialist*

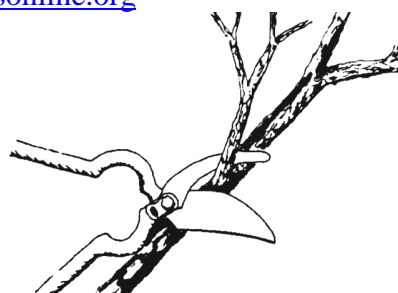
Landscape trees need proper care and management throughout their lives. One of the most important tree management practices is pruning. Pruning is more than just indiscriminately removing branches. When done properly, pruning can improve the health and structure of the tree. Proper pruning includes knowing which branch to remove to minimize damage to the tree.

The main reason to prune young trees is to develop good branch structure. Attention to developing good structure is most critical in the first 15-20 years of a tree's life. The best time to prune is mid to late winter (January-March). Pruning at other times will not hurt a tree, but the process of sealing the wound may be slower.

Oak is one species where timing is critical. The pathogen that causes the disease Oak Wilt can be transmitted to open wounds by a small beetle that appears in spring and summer. For this reason, avoid pruning oaks from March 15<sup>th</sup> through mid-August.

Limit pruning of newly planted trees to the removal of dead and broken branches or the correction of multiple leaders. Leave the temporary lower branches on the tree until they reach 1 inch in diameter to increase trunk growth and root development. Concentrate efforts on removing crossing, rubbing, broken, diseased, and weak-angled branches in the upper portion of the tree. Also, eliminate double leaders and basal sprouts. Remember, pruning is, ongoing throughout a tree's life.

Proper pruning will help enable young landscape trees to survive and thrive. For more information on pruning, Iowa State University Extension Publication SUL-5, "Pruning Trees and Shrubs" can be gotten at you extension office. You may also want to check out the publications from Nebraska Extension "Pruning Fruit Trees" or "Pruning the Orchard" from Utah State University available through E - Answers at:  
[http:// www.e-answersonline.org](http://www.e-answersonline.org)



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Please share *Acreage Answers* with your acreage neighbors. Call your local ISU Extension office to be placed on the mailing list for *Acreage Answers* and to give us suggestions for future articles.

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Acreage Answers is available  
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[www.extension.iastate.edu/polk/ag](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/polk/ag)

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# Weights, Measures, and Arithmetic for Acreage Owners

*By Carl Neifert, ISU Extension Livestock Specialist*

The following are rules of thumb and weights and measures that acreage owners may find useful.

- An inch is the width of a thumb or the length of a forefinger from tip to first joint.
- A foot is the length of a man's foot or the length of 12-thumb widths.
- An acre was the amount of land one man could plow with oxen in one day.
- A yard is the distance from the tip of a man's nose to the end of the fingers on his outstretched arms.
- There are 5.5 yards (16.5 feet) in one rod, 320 rods per mile, or 5,280 feet per mile.
- There are 43,560 square feet per acre or 160 square rods per acre. One hectare equals 2.471 acres.
- There are 2 pints per quart, 4 quarts per gallon, or 31.5 gallons per barrel.
- There are 8 quarts per peck and 4 pecks per bushel.
- One hand equals 4 inches in measuring a horse's height.
- In feet multiply the height, width, and length of a pile of wood and divide by 128 to give you the number of cords. For example 10' x 10' x 3' = 300 cubic feet  $300 \div 128 = 2.3$  cords of wood.
- One gallon of water equals 8.34 pounds or 3,800 grams.
- One acre-foot is 1 acre of surface area covered by 1 foot of water.
- One bushel: weight in pounds  
shelled corn -56, ear corn-70, apples-48,  
soybeans-60, oats-32, potatoes-60

# Raising Meat-type Chickens

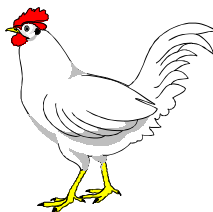
By Carl Neifert, ISU Extension Livestock Specialist

Today's crossbred meat-type broiler baby chicks let you grow several different kinds of meat for the family table. Birds can be harvested at five weeks- 1.75 lbs. (Rock-Cornish single serving birds), 7-8 weeks- 4 lbs. (broiler or fryer), 12-13 weeks – 8 lbs. (roaster). Pullets can also be kept for three to four months of egg production and harvested as baking hens or kept for a year as layers and harvested as stewing hens. Most meat-type birds are a combination of Cornish and White Rock genetics.

Birds need a good environment for maximum growth. This includes an absorbent litter on a wood or concrete floor, and a brooder with a heat source to maintain temperatures of 91° when chicks arrive. Reduce temperature four to five degrees per week until you reach room temperature. Complete feeds are available to feed chicks from arrival to harvest. These feeds usually contain 18-20 percent protein and provide a coccidiosis-control agent.

Chicks need ample space for feed and water to avoid crowding. Increase ventilation as birds grow and feather. Monitor birds closely. Their activities will indicate their comfort. Cold chicks huddle together and cheep hoarsely.

For meat-type chickens, it takes about 2 lbs. of feed to produce a pound of bird. Thus a 4-pound broiler will eat about 8 pounds of feed before harvest. Production costs should range from \$.33 - \$.85 / lb. of bird harvested, not including your labor and facility costs.



## Farmers' Markets

By Patrick O'Malley, Commercial Horticulture Specialist

Acreage owners may consider growing fruits and vegetables and becoming vendors at local farmers' markets or roadside stands.

Consumer demand for fruits and vegetables, especially fresh ones, is increasing as nutritional and health claims gain credibility.

Here are some points to consider before putting those first seeds or plants into the ground.

**Quality** is the major reason for dissatisfaction with grocery store products. Growers must be able to produce a high quality product.

**Timing** is important if you want top dollar. The earliest sweet corn, for example, brings a better price than that harvested later in the season.



**Roadside** stands allow the grower to market produce closer to the acreage. Success is largely dependent upon the stand being near the customer in terms of distance and convenience. (Remember the three rules of a successful business are: location, location, location.)

A yearly Farm Fresh Directory is compiled and distributed by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, which lists farmers' markets (including contact numbers) and individual growers. It is available at ISU Extension offices or at: [www.state.ia.us/agriculture](http://www.state.ia.us/agriculture)

Note: It may be a good idea to contact growers outside your area who would not perceive you as competition.



# Weed Management Program Planned

By Joe Yedlik, Jones County Extension Director

Weed management is the topic for a two-hour program offered by Iowa State University Extension in central and southwest Iowa on March 11<sup>th</sup> from 7-9 pm. Approximately 25 sites will be offering the session via ICN.

Dave Minner, commercial horticulture/ turfgrass specialist; Patrick O'Malley, commercial horticulture specialist; and Brent Pringnitz, agronomy specialist, will be the presenters.

The program will be divided into two segments to cover both lawn and pasture weed management. The program will address the identification of common weeds as well as the recommended practices that may be used to control weeds in lawn and pastures used for horses and other livestock.

Preregistration is recommended as sites with low registration may be canceled. Cost is \$10 for an individual and \$15 for couples registered by March 5<sup>th</sup>. Late registrations will cost an additional \$5. For more information, call your local extension office.



# Why have skunks invaded my acreage?

By, Jim Pease, Extension Wildlife Specialist

Insects and insect grubs are the favorite foods of skunks. However, mice, rats, berries, and small grains are also parts of their diet. Skunks also take advantage of domesticated poultry, eating eggs and birds when given access. While hollow logs, shallow burrows, and brush piles are used for dens, skunks readily adapt to old buildings and raised decks.

Aside from their offensive smell, their burrows, diggings in lawns, and eating poultry often put them in conflict with humans. They are often identified with a strain of rabies in outbreaks of the disease every few years. People should avoid contact with odd-behaving skunks, animals out in the daytime, staggering, aggressive behavior, etc. Move yourself, children and pets away and report it immediately to local animal control authorities.

Prevent skunk problems with a bit of forethought. Fence the bottom of raised decks and trailers. Bury the fencing at least 6 inches. Clean up yards, garages, outbuildings, etc. that attract rodents and may encourage skunks and give them shelter. If they take up residence anyway, some frightening lights or sounds or smell repellents (naphthalene



crystals/mothballs or ammonia-soaked rags) may prove to be temporary solutions. Use them ONLY in combination with exclusion and prevention methods.

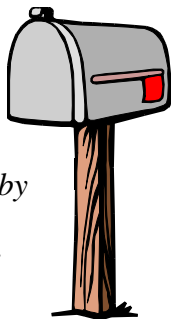
Trapping and removal are legal in Iowa, but is best done by professional animal handlers as a last resort. Animals may be euthanized or released at least 10-15 miles from the area.

While a variety of tales concerning removing skunk spray exist, here's one that actually works! The recipe was developed in 1993 by Paul Krebaum, a chemist working on thiols the stinky chemicals that, among other things, make feces and other decomposing flesh stink and are present in abundance in skunk spray.

Mix 1 quart of 3 percent hydrogen peroxide with ¼ cup baking soda and 1 teaspoon of liquid soap. Apply immediately. Rinse off with tap water. (The bubbling neutralizes and volatilizes the thiols, carrying them away in the oxygen.) This can be used on cloth, pets, wood or other material that has been sprayed.

# Curbside Mailboxes

*Information provided by  
Betty Phillips,  
Indianola Postmaster*



The U.S. Postal Service requires mailboxes meet the following five requirements:

1. Approved by the Postmaster General
2. Designed to protect the mail from weather
3. Safe to use
4. Conveniently located
5. Neat in appearance

Generally, mailboxes are installed at a height of 3.5 – 4 feet from the road surface to the bottom of the mailbox. There should be 6-8 inches from the front of the curb or road edge to the mailbox door. The mailboxes must be on the right-hand side of the road in the carrier's line of travel and grouped together when practical. Customers must keep the mailbox free from obstructions including vehicles, trashcans, and snow, which may impede efficient delivery.

You are responsible for ensuring that posts are neat and adequate in strength and size. The ideal support is an assembly that bends or falls away when struck by a vehicle. Heavy metal and concrete posts are examples of dangerous supports. The Federal Highway Administration has determined that mailbox supports no larger than 4 inches by 4 inches, or a

2-inch diameter standard steel or aluminum pipe, buried no more than 24 inches, should safely break away if struck by a vehicle. The mailbox must also be securely attached to its post to prevent separation if struck.

Customers are required to contact their local postmaster before erecting or replacing mailboxes.

## Prairie Management

*By Steve Lekwa, Story County  
Conservation Director*

Planting native tallgrass prairie mixes has become popular in rural areas. Proper management is needed to maintain the planting.

Prairie plants need nearly full sunlight to thrive. Woody plants tend to show up over time and shade the prairie plants unless they're controlled. Fire every three to five years is the preferred method of prairie management, but hand cutting and even mowing may need to be considered when fire isn't an option.

Prairie burning should not be considered without proper preparation, tools, and enough help. Advise local fire officials before starting any planned burn. Basic tools include heavy steel rakes for spreading fire and clearing fuel from prepared check strips,

which can be closely mowed turf or even tilled. The goal is no fuel in a strip at least five feet wide on the upwind side ranging to 10 or more feet on the downwind side. Plenty of water should be on hand with a garden hose or at least a backpack or Hudson- style sprayers. Heavy rubber fire flappers are helpful to smother smaller fires in light growth. At least three trained people need to be on hand, and more help make for safer burning.



Don't burn on days with low humidity or high winds. Start fires on the downwind side when everyone is ready. Burning slowly into the wind is easier to control. ("Front fires" moving with the wind can be very fast, hot, and difficult to control.) Late March into early May is good for spring burning. Late October until snow cover is good for fall fires.

Watch for taller plants and heavier blooming in the growing season after a burn. Sources of information and possible help include your county conservation board, local NRCS offices, and the IDNR.