

How does your garden grow?

by Agnes B. Millward
About two days after writing last week's article, I found my Snowdrops blooming under the snow, along with a clump of yellow crocus which were showing colour. Since then the Snowdrops have almost finished and the crocus are blooming merrily in the company of some white and purple crocus. This is only in one exposed corner of the garden, the rest is still deep in snow, even after all the rain this past week. However, the weather has moderated enough for us to think of, and start doing some early spring chores, specifically pruning, which should be done now or as soon as it is easy for you to approach your trees or shrubs.

Pruning is an important job in the garden, for with discriminatory cutting away of branches and limbs, you will create healthy, airy and pleasing plants to view from your yard. When you begin to prune, don't do it in a hurry, stand well back from your work and evaluate what you have done so far, if you think that you have achieved the shape you want, leave it for a few days and if it doesn't bother your eye, then perhaps it should be left alone. At no time should more than one-third of the tree be pruned out in any given year, as the bark could be exposed to sunburn and damage the tree. The only exception to this rule is the pruning of fruit trees, which are pruned heavily to promote more and better quality fruit.

When pruning deciduous trees, try to do them as early in the spring as possible, cut out damage, winter-killed branches, which may block a doorway or a path; take out some of the inner branches to allow light and air into the centre of the tree, and take out any branches which cross each other and rub together. Small branches may be removed with clippers or garden shears, but branches which are bigger should be cut out with a pruning saw, which is slightly curved. Once the branch is removed, pare away any splinters with a sharp knife, and all cuts over an inch in diameter should be painted with pruning paint, which is available in a spray bomb or a can. Painting the pruning wounds, prevents the sap from running down the trunk, prevents disease and vermin from entering the system of the tree.

Coniferous trees should be pruned to encourage their natural growth and to keep them to a height which you prefer, trim out the new growth by one half, on the side canes, leaving the leader (trip candle) a little longer than the rest. Cedar, yew, juniper, and the broadleaved evergreens, such as holly, mahonia and euonymus, can be cut at any time as they will branch out from the cut, and these greens are widely used by flower arrangers in their designs, therefore these plants are pruned lightly all the time. However, evergreens such as the pine, spruce and fir should be pruned only if the shape of the tree is not marred, as they will not branch out again from that location again.

Flowering shrubs, should be pruned only after the shrubs have finished blooming. Some shrubs bloom on growth produced in the past year, such as mock-orange, forsythia, pussywillows, wiggelia, they should be pruned after blooming by taking out some of the older branches right at the ground level, and by removing all dead or damaged branches. Lilac should be pruned immediately after

Cont'd p 7

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Cont'd from 6

blooming, and all dead blooms should be removed, being careful to cut in front of the two little side-buds as they are next year's blooms. The shrubs that bloom on growth produced this year, such as buddleia, allirea, hydrangea and bitter-sweet, should be pruned in early spring or late winter by cutting out the oldest branches at the ground level.

If you have a hedge, it needs attention too, and if you like the formal precise type, you will have to trim it every time you cut the grass, however, there are types which don't need that amount of attention, one, the Alpine Currant, usually needs only one trimming in the early summer, but the chinese elm will want three trimmings at least, through the growing season. Evergreen hedges, such as the cedar should be pruned once a year in the early summer, on a dull day, so it won't suffer from sunburn and shapey hedge, they require sun or strong light all over, and to insure they receive these requirements, trim your hedge so that it is wider at the base and narrow on the top. If this shape is reversed so that your hedge has a fat head, eventually the lower branches will thin out and die, and you will end up with a top heavy hedge with a skimpy base.

A word of caution, if you can't prune your trees easily from the ground or from a step ladder, it might be best for you and your tree to bring in a tree expert to do the job. Also, this is the time of the year that thoughts turn to planting new trees and you should decide now what you want, so the plants are delivered as soon as you want to break ground. Huronia Nurseries are an excellent source for trees and shrubs and they carry the varieties which are hardy for our area and which will bloom in our area. Many trees and plants might grow here, but it is questionable whether they will flower or bear fruit. Always bear that in mind when buying and don't hesitate to ask questions.

Volunteer shortage closes meals program

A shortage of volunteer cooks and drivers has forced a temporary suspension of the meals-on-wheels program in Victoria Harbour.

The last day meals will be prepared and delivered to program recipients will be Friday, April 21.

The Harbour meals-on-wheels program has been underway for five years, and has served up to 13 persons unable to prepare meals for themselves. The program presently serves three such persons.

Mrs. Maida Evans, who has been with the program in the Harbour since its inception, told The Times that organizers simply ran out of volunteers. Recently, she said, mothers with small children had been doing most of the leg work, but gradually discovered they didn't have enough time to maintain their families and perform their volunteer duties.

Mrs. Evans emphasized that the program's suspension is only temporary. There are still funds on deposit sufficient enough to get the program started again.

"We're hoping that it will start again soon," she said, "but someone has to respond to the need for cooks and drivers."