

Broken trees can be fixed

region gardener

By Marion Bluegrass
Dear Marion: What is the best thing to do for a spruce tree whose top-most centre branch has been broken? The tree is right in the middle of my front lawn, so I'd like to preserve its appearance. Mr. K. H., Richmond Hill.

This branch, called the "leader," will have to be replaced, and if you do it carefully it won't even be noticeable after a couple of years.

First, trim the damaged stub of the old leader down as far as the first set of side shoots.

Then take the strongest one of these side shoots and gently bend it up so it runs straight up and down, in the same direction as the trunk of the tree.

Get a long stick and use this as a splint to hold the shoot in this position by fastening the stick to both the shoot and the trunk of the tree.

Leave the splint in place for at least two years, by which time the new leader should look like an extension of the trunk.

Over the years, the slight bend should become less and less noticeable.

Dear Marion: I'd like to grow blueberries in my garden. What should I do to prepare the bed? I've heard they're difficult to grow in some soils.

Mrs. M. N., King

Not specially difficult, but yes, they do have certain soil requirements.

Unlike most plants, blueberries need an acid soil, so when you're preparing the ground, dig a fairly large area, and go down about two feet deep.

Then add one of the soil acidifiers such as aluminum or ferrous sulphate. These, or an equivalent, can be purchased at any garden centre.

Other than that, these berry bushes only need the same well-drained soil any plant likes. A mixture of topsoil and peat moss is good.

You'll need to plant at least three plants, and preferably fairly close together, so the bushes can cross-fertilize.

Send your indoor or outdoor gardening questions to Marion Bluegrass, c/o The Liberal, Box 390, Richmond Hill.

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