

Don't Top That Tree

UNIVERSITY PARK, (Centre Co.)—Early spring is a good time to prune many trees, but it is important to do this properly. Topping—cutting the crown off—not only makes a tree ugly, it can lead to its early death, says a Penn State ornamental horticulture expert.

"Many home owners assume that if they top a large tree, it will compensate by producing a new, healthy, lower-growing crown," says J. Robert Nuss, professor of ornamental horticulture in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences. "It's not true. Removing the central trunk and the tops of main branches permanently destroys a tree's form and causes unnatural growth."

Topping severely weakens trees because it removes too many leaves. Without enough leaves to photosynthesize, the tree slowly starves to death.

When trees are topped, they develop bristling "water sprouts," or "suckers." To the untrained eye, this looks as though the tree is rejuvenating," says Nuss. "But suckers don't develop into substantial limbs or produce enough leaves. They remain weak and spindly, and snap off easily in

storms." Sometimes topped trees develop a double leader, or trunk. This new trunk often is weaker than the original and can be prone to splitting. The massive root system also is weakened because it no longer receives adequate nourishment from the crown. Trees in this condition are more likely to split or blow over in a storm.

"If you plan to top a tree in your yard because you fear it might blow over on your house, consider this: a mature tree with a healthy root system is much less likely to blow over than a weak one with damaged roots," says Nuss.

Topping a tree also creates large wounds where the crown and limbs are cut off. It takes years for these stubs to heal. In the meantime, they provide the perfect environment for harmful insects, disease and decay.

"Before you prune a tree, think about what you want to accomplish," says Nuss. "It's also important to learn about the tree's natural form, growth habit, growth rate, height and spread."

"Pruning is meant to remove dead, diseased, damaged or insect-infested branches and keep the rest of the tree healthy. It's also

used to allow more air and light to reach the center of a tree."

On trees more than 20 feet tall, it's wise to hire a professional tree service. "If you're inexperienced and attempt to prune a large tree, you could injure yourself as well as the tree," says Nuss. "Tree services have the knowledge and equipment to do this job effectively and safely."

Utility companies often are forced to top trees growing under wires—the only alternative is to cut the trees down. "If you have utility wires crossing your property, it's best not to plant trees under them," says Nuss. "If you want to plant trees under wires, plant low-growing ones, such as dogwoods or redbuds."

Two free Penn State publications, "Pruning Ornamental Plants" and "A Guide for Selecting Shade and Flowering Trees for Pennsylvania Landscapes," provide additional information about choosing and maintaining trees and shrubs. Both are available from extension offices and the Publications Distribution Center, 112 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, PA 16802, (814) 865-6713.

Pure Maple Syrup

(Continued from Page B2) fete includes a Queen's Ball, other dancing, festival quilt show, auto and classic car shows, juried art show, horseshoe pitching, stage entertainment, grand feature parade and Maple Manor in Festival Park. See a cobbler's shop and antique doctor's office. Eat spotza.

Tourists who crave sojourns away from the maddening crowds will discover untold and unadvertised treasures gentling the lesser traveled nexus of community roadways.

Quaint country stores, antique outlets, enchanting restaurants, buggys, farms and schools of the local Amish, and the peaceful presence of serene and well-kept churches; a manifestation of the people's need to worship God.

Following is a listing of activities:

April 22: Historical Pageant, 2 p.m.; Queen's Ball, 9 p.m.

April 23: Pony and Horse Pulling Contest, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Stage Entertainment, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Street Rod & Classic Auto Show, noon - 5 p.m.; Maple Run, 1:30 p.m.

April 28: Historical Pageant, 2:30 p.m.; Stage Entertainment, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Teen Dance, 8 - 11 p.m.

April 29: Stage Entertainment, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Historical Pageant, 2 p.m.; Grand Feature Parade, 5 p.m.; Oldies Dance, 9 p.m.

April 30: Stage Entertainment, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Antique Auto

Show, noon - 5 p.m.; Horseshoe Pitching, noon - 5 p.m.

Pancakes, sausage and maple syrup will be available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during both festival weekends in Salisbury and Meyersdale. Signs along Route 219 will point the way.

The Tub Mill Arts Association will host shows both weekends featuring artists such as watercolorist, Shirley Tataleba and wood carver, Ken Miller, whose love of Native American culture is expressed in his works. The gallery is at 117 Ord Street, Salisbury, a block off Route 219 and has plenty of maple syrup available, too.

SUGAR CRUSTED MAPLE CAKE

- 1 package yellow cake mix
- 1/2 cup cooking oil
- 1 cup water
- 3 eggs
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup maple syrup

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour 12-cup fluted tube pan. In large bowl blend cake mix, eggs, oil and water until moistened. Beat 2 minutes at highest speed. Pour into prepared pan. Bake 35 to 40 minutes until toothpick inserted into center comes out clean. In small saucepan, heat sugar and syrup until mixture boils and sugar is melted. Pour around edges of hot cake. Cool upright in pan 15 minutes; turn onto serving plate. Serve warm or cool. Makes 10-inch ring cake.



Rebecca Cogan, right, was crowned Pennsylvania Queen Maple XLVIII at the contest held in Somerset. She succeeds Katie Thomas of Meyersdale and will reign over the 48th Pennsylvania Maple Festival in Meyersdale on April 22, 23, 28, 29 and 30.

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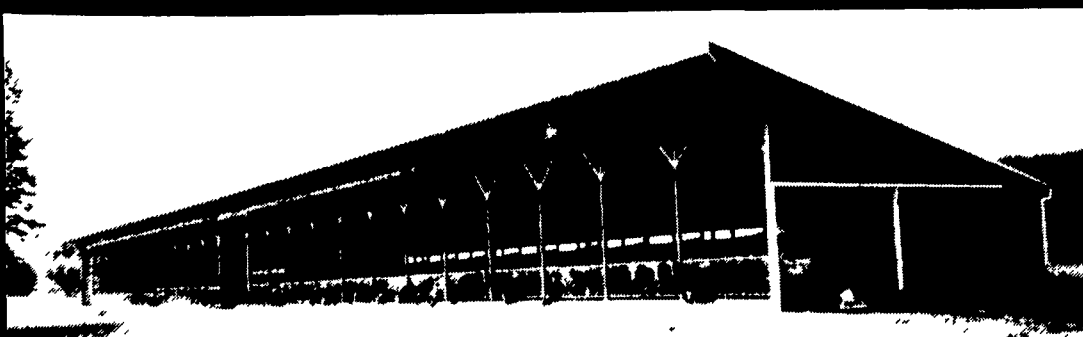
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