To Move or Prune
By Shawn Banks

“I just bought this house and there are several shrubs in the area between the walkway and the house that are growing out into the walkway. How far can I safely cut them back and when?” This is one of the common questions I receive as the Extension Agent responsible for consumer horticulture. The good news is that many broadleaf evergreens can be rejuvenated (cut back severely) once or twice in their lifetime without causing much harm to the overall health of the plant. Junipers and similar plants used around foundations can’t take the severe pruning.

The bigger question is, “If the plant is outgrowing the area it was intended for, should I prune it to keep it in bounds or should I move it to an area where it will have more room to grow?” This is the question each homeowner needs to answer for him or herself. When trying to answer this question, here are a few things to consider:

- Do I have the time to keep the plants pruned each year?

Plants can handle having up to 1/3 of the vegetative growth removed at each pruning without putting the plant into recovery mode. Depending on the plant that will need to be pruned, pruning may need to be done 1 to 3 times during the year.

- Is there another place in the yard where these plants might grow? Sometimes the only place suitable for a particular plant is right next to the house. Other plants might be better served by moving them to a different area where they can reach their full potential in height and beauty.

- Is it time to give the foundation planting an overhaul? If the plants have been there for several years, it may just be time to re-landscape the area. Maybe the house needs a fresh new look. In the last ten years or so, there have been many
new dwarf shrub varieties introduced into the market that do well as foundation plants without needing a lot of pruning.

If pruning is still the best option, below are a couple publications or websites you may want to take a look at before making the first cut.

1. **Pruning Trees and Shrubs: A Guide for Grounds Managers** – This publication explains how to make the proper cuts for a natural looking tree or shrub. It also explains the correct way to shape a hedge so there will be continuous green from the top to the bottom. [www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/agpubs/ag-071.pdf](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/agpubs/ag-071.pdf)

2. **A Successful Guide to Pruning, Shrub Pruning Calendar** – This publication put out by Virginia Tech has many of the most common plants we grow listed. They are in the same zone so the timing is the same. They also have some very helpful notes listed by each species of plant to let you know if pruning in early winter or fall will reduce the cold hardiness of the plant, or if the plant needs a midseason trim to keep the formal hedge appearance, as well as a few other helpful hints. [http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/430/430-462/430-462.html](http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/430/430-462/430-462.html)

If the decision is to transplant, then the publication **Transplanting Established Trees and Shrubs** from Clemson University is a very good reference. It goes into detail about how to properly prepare the plant by root pruning, tying up the limbs, and has a chart to help determine how big the root ball should be when moving your plant. [http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/landscape/shrubs/hgic1055.html](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/landscape/shrubs/hgic1055.html)

After reading this article and the other referenced materials, you should have the information needed to make the decision to move or prune. One last thing to keep in mind, a garden is a never-ending project. There is always something to do that will get you outside to embrace nature.

### FEATURED PLANT

**Viburnum ‘Huron’**

By Vicki Shore

![Viburnum 'Huron'](image)

The Huron Viburnum is a multi-stemmed, semi-evergreen large shrub, growing up to 8 feet with a spread of 9 feet. This easily grown shrub presents showy white flowers in mid spring and glossy red fruit in summer to late fall. The dark green, textured leaves turn to a deep purple in fall.

The Huron Viburnum is an adaptable plant but does best in heavy loom with adequate water. Sun to partial shade is a preference. This low maintenance shrub is desirable to birds, but deer- not so much, which makes it attractive for homeowners with the necessary space.
This plant was introduced as part of the U.S. National Arboretum's plant introduction program in 1986. More information about this plant can be found by downloading this pdf from the introduction program.

www.usna.usda.gov/Newintro/Viburnum_ChippewaHuron_LR.pdf

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Fruit and Nut Tree Sale** – Order forms are now available. We have added persimmon to the list of plants available and the peach trees will be on Gaurdian rootstock for better nematode resistance. Orders forms and checks should be returned to Johnston County Cooperative Extension, 2736 NC 210 Highway, Smithfield, NC 27577 by Thursday, November 10.

Other Events through Cooperative Extension – Call to register for these events 989-5380.
- **Homebuyer Workshop** – October 6; 4:00pm – 7:00pm
- **Heritage Quilt Show** – October 13th – 15th
- **Chill your Bill**: Home Energy Conservation – November 8; 5:30pm – 7:30pm

**Events at Johnston Community College** – These events have a fee and people interested in attending these events should pre-register on their website [johnstonnc.edu/arboretum/events.aspx](http://johnstonnc.edu/arboretum/events.aspx) or by calling 919 209-2052.
- **Making More by Division** – Tuesday, October 4; 8:00am – 10:00am
- **Edible Landscaping** – Wednesday, October 12; 2:00pm – 4:00pm
- **The Bluffs Tour: Hemlock and Swiftcreek Bluffs** – Wednesday, October 19; 8:30am – 5:30pm
- **West Point on the Enos Architectural Trees** – Wednesday, October 26; 8:00am – 5:00pm

**YARD VILLIAN**

**Eastern Mole**

by Tina Stricklen

Why are there squishy spots in my lawn? What keeps making those raised tunnels that seem to crisscross the garden? If you are asking these questions, it is highly likely you have a mole infestation. A mole is a small, burrowing mammal that feeds on insects including but not limited to earthworms, grubs, beetles, ants, flies, crickets, and wasps. In the process of foraging for these insects they disturb roots thus damaging plants. Here in the eastern part of North Carolina that damage is usually the work of the eastern mole or *Scalopus aquaticus.*
The habits of these subterranean creatures make it difficult to control them. They live in dens which are usually situated under large trees, buildings or sidewalks. These dens are connected to their hunting ground which is a maze of runways covering a large area. Their food intake requirements are so great; they are frequently on the go. With few predators and no hibernation period, these critters will repeatedly plow up lawn and garden areas. If these tunnels become a nuisance, you will need to trap them in order to reduce mole activity in your landscape. I emphasize the word “reduce” since total eradication is not attainable.

Some gardeners tell of placing broken glass, thorny branches, chewing gum or even human hair in a mole run but studies show this practice is not effective. Neither is growing caster bean or mole plant nor reducing their food supply of grubs by spreading milky spore. In the case of the latter, grubs is just a small portion of the mole’s diet. Besides, if all your neighbors are not treating their property, then you will likely have moles migrating back into your lawn.

The most effective way to control moles is by trapping them. Since moles are classified as a non-game animal under state law and there is no open hunting or trapping season, a permit is necessary. You will need to contact the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission at http://www.ncwildlife.org/index.htm to obtain a depredation permit. Using a spear-type trap installed in a frequently used runway is the most effective, lethal control for moles. These devices can be found in your local hardware store or garden center. Realize that the best time to trap them is during their most active periods in the spring and fall months. For more information on these interesting creatures and how to manage them, please visit the following site: http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/Other_Pests/Moles.aspx.

What’s In Season!

Butternut Squash
Cucurbita moschata

Butternut squash is one of my favorite squash. It has a smooth textured flesh that is sweet to the taste especially after a few weeks of storage. Like the sweetpotato this squash seems to develop a sweeter flavor after a little time in storage.

The butternut squash is a tender annual damaged by frost. It needs to be planted after all danger of frost. The soil temperature needs to be above 65°F. For better seed germination soil temperatures of 70°F are preferable. Seeds can be started indoors, but there is really no need as we have a long enough growing season to place them directly into the soil.

The Soil should be prepared ahead of time and amended with organic matter to add fertility. The seeds should be sown in groups of three or four, with each grouping given about 4 to 5 feet of space to grow. The vines will fill in the gaps. From planting of seed it takes about 105 days or more before the first fruits will be ready for harvest.
Depending on the variety chosen, each vine will yield 3 to 5 fruit weighing 2 ½ to 5 pounds each. The squash can be harvested when the skin has turned hard and lost the shine of the immature fruit. You’ll know the skin is hard when a fingernail cannot puncture it. Leaving them out in the sun or keeping them in a room at 80° to 90°F for 5 to 7 days will cure the fruit. Then they should be stored in a cool (50° to 65°), dry space. They will store for up to 6 months. Eat the smaller squash first to get the longest storage.

**Recipe:** Roasted Vegetables

**Ingredients**

1 small butternut squash, cubed 
2 red bell peppers, seeded and diced 
1 sweetpotato, peeled and cubed 
3 Yukon Gold potatoes, cubed 
1 red onion, quartered 
1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme 
2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary 
¼ cup olive oil 
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar 
salt and freshly ground black pepper

**Directions**

1. Preheat oven to 475°F 

2. In a large bowl, combine the squash, red bell peppers, sweetpotato, and Yukon Gold potatoes. Separate the red onion quarters into pieces, and add them to the mixture.

3. In a small bowl, stir together thyme, rosemary, olive oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Toss with vegetables until they are coated. Spread evenly on a large roasting pan.

4. Roast for 35 to 40 minutes in the preheated oven, stirring every 10 minutes, or until vegetables are cooked through and browned.

**References:**


Storing Winter Squash and Pumpkins, HIL-24-C: [http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-24-c.html](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-24-c.html)


**October Garden Tasks**

Fall is for planting! Autumn is an ideal time to plant or transplant deciduous trees/shrubs and perennials. Fall is also a great time to till the soil and add organic material and lime. The bed will have plenty of time to "mellow" before next spring. Turning over the soil also exposes harmful insects and grubs to predators.

**GENERAL UPKEEP**

- Collect soil samples for testing. Test your lawn, flowerbeds & vegetable garden. Testing should be done every 2-3 years. The kits and analysis are FREE. Strong healthy plants start with proper soil pH and fertility.

- Throw away any diseased plant material. Do not put it in a compost pile. Leaving infected plant material on the plants or on the ground provides a source of inoculum for next years infection.
**LAWN CARE**

- Pamper newly seeded fescue lawns. Little grass plants have very small, shallow roots. Keep them watered. Don’t let falling leaves smother them. Use a leaf blower on low power or rake very gently so you don’t uproot the tender young plants.
- If desired, Bermuda lawns may be overseeded with annual rye at a rate of 5 lbs/1000 sq ft.

**TREES, SHRUBS & ORNAMENTALS**

- Improve your clay soil. Shrubs and perennials can drown and suffocate in sticky clay soils. Loosening the soil and adding well-rotted compost, in a ratio of one part compost to two parts soil, allows plants to grow much better. Mix it well with the soil, making a bed 8-12" deep.
- Use shredded leaves as mulch. Fallen leaves contain lots of nutrients, but they decompose slowly. Help the process along by grinding up your leaves rather than sending them to the dump. Don’t have a shredder? Rake the leaves into rows and run over them with a mower, preferably one with a bagger attachment.
- Plan for planting. Buying on impulse can be costly and labor-intensive in the future. Before hitting the stores, determine "What does this particular site need?" Select plants that will do well in the available site conditions. Consider the mature size of the plant, also.
- Purchase spring-flowering bulbs and store them in a cool place until chilly weather sets in and you can plant them. Daffodils, Spanish Bluebells (Hyacinthoides hispanicus), and Snowflakes (Leucojum aestivum) are bulbs to consider. By contrast, Tulips and Dutch hyacinths decline after their first season in Johnston County, and are best treated as annuals.
- Compost your yard waste! As you cut back perennials in preparation for winter, think about returning that bounty to your garden in the form of compost. Compost is nature’s favorite fertilizer and soil conditioner. Recycle grass clippings, leaves, and non-diseased garden refuse. Email me for a copy of a publication on how to create compost.
- Wait to prune trees and shrubs. Pruning before dormancy may induce tender, new growth that will not have time to harden off before the first frost.
- Take cuttings of begonias, coleus, geraniums and impatiens to root and grow indoors during winter.
- Remove bagworms from evergreens to greatly minimize their population numbers for next year. The eggs for next years caterpillars are in the bag.
- Trigger roses into dormancy by no longer deadheading spent flowers and allow rose hips to form.
- Avoid cool season weeds by applying the appropriate pre-emergent herbicide to plant beds and turf areas that had cool season weeds last year.
- Coddle Holiday Cactus - Leave your holiday cactus outdoors in a spot that gets...
a few hours of bright sun and no light after dark. Give it regular water and fertilizer. The combination of attentive care, bright daytime, and long, dark nights sets the stage for heavy flower bud production in early winter.

**VEGETABLES & FRUITS**

- Plant a cover crop in your vegetable garden. Legumes, such as clover and alfalfa, will enrich the soil by fixing nitrogen. Cover crops prevent erosion and can be turned over to decompose in the soil and provide needed organic matter.
- Consider planting a fruit tree. The ideal time to plant is December. We will be starting our tree fruit and nut sale in October in preparation for delivery and planting in December.
- Good sanitation is important for disease and insect control. Thoroughly clean up fallen leaves and fruit. Don’t forget fruit left hanging on trees.
- Dig sweet potatoes before frost.
- Keep pecans picked up. Weevil larva for next year’s populations will crawl out of the nuts and overwinter in the soil if the nuts are not picked up.
- Build a cold frame to plant cool-weather vegetables for harvest into early winter. For further details visit [http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/johnston/homehort2/howto.html#COLD_FRAME](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/johnston/homehort2/howto.html#COLD_FRAME)
- If you are concerned that nematodes may be causing problems, NCDA offers a test for only $3.00 to check for nematodes. The forms, boxes and bags are available at the Cooperative Extension office.

**HOUSEPLANTS**

- Store tender tubers - such as dahlia, caladium, gladiolus, geranium, and tuberous begonia - which may not overwinter in the garden. Lift roots, tubers, or corms about the time of our first killing frost, just after their foliage dries. Dig deep enough so that the roots will not be snapped apart when lifted from the soil. Leave soil around dahlia tubers, canna, and caladium roots.
- Store tubers in a dry, cool, frost-free place such as a basement. Do not store on back porch or in garage; these plants cannot withstand freezing. Also, store them where rodents will not eat them.
- Geraniums can be overwintered in pots, or bare root in paper bags. Store in a garage or other building until soil dries and falls away from plant parts. Shake soil off roots and tubers, and cut away dried stem. Discard any plant parts that show soft spots or disease. Place tubers and roots in old sawdust or peatmoss, in a flat box or plastic bag with holes for ventilation.
- Check your houseplants for insects before bringing them indoors. A few insects on plants outside can easily turn into a problem inside. Giving plants a bath with mild soap often does a good clean up job.