To Prune or not to Prune

As trees shed their leaves for winter, many gardeners sharpen their pruning tools. Anytime between late fall and early spring is ideal for tree trimming and pruning, if it’s needed. With a clear view minus the leaves, the tree branch structure is visible. That can help you decide whether to prune or not. Pruning is an art. Unfortunately, there are many bad examples out there. Before you decide on pruning, follow the 3D’s:

- Dead or dying – Remove dead branches or limbs
- Diseased – Remove diseased or insect-infested limbs
- Damaged – Remove storm damage or crossing branches to ensure good structure

Other than that, trees and shrubs do not need much pruning. If you need help, hire a qualified arborist, and always keep safety in mind.

Protect your Pipes and Avoid Costly Repairs

When temperatures fall below 30 degrees you might run the risk of water freezing inside pipes. When water freezes, it expands and creates pressure within the pipes. Burst pipes are the most common cause of property water damage during cold spells. The most vulnerable pipes are those in unheated spaces such as garages, basements and attics as well as those outside (think irrigation systems).

Pipe insulation is cheap in comparison to water damage from a cracked pipe. See the following tips to protect your pipes:

- Keep the garage doors closed if the water lines are in the garage.
- Open a faucet just a drip to allow water movement in the pipes.
- Leave kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors open to allow warm air circulate around the pipes. Be sure to remove cleaners and chemicals so kids and pets will not get to them.
- Always the thermostat to be lower than 55 degrees, especially if you’ll be away and a cold snap is forecasted.
- Insulate exposed pipes with insulation sleeves, wrapping or slip-on foam insulation.
- Insulate attics, garages, basements to prevent drafts. Seal cracks and windows.
- Make sure to drain your irrigation system.
- Watch the video below to learn more.

How Plants Adapt to Conserve

Did you know that plants have specific desert adaptations that help them survive and thrive?

Here are a few ways showing how plants are resilient:

- Waxy coverings in desert plants help keep them cool and reduce water loss.
- Small leaves help reduce moisture loss.
- Shallow widespread roots help absorb as much rainfall moisture as possible.
- Spiny or hairy features help prevent damage from drying winds. Plants with these features have adapted to retain water by reducing water loss through evaporation. They also have developed large root systems to take advantage of nearby moisture.

Here are some examples of desert plants. Can you spot the specific adaptations?

Palo Verde
Prickly Pear
Ocotillo

Save the Date:
DiscoverE - Building Curiously
Water, Robotics and Engineering - Saturday, February 22

Future innovators can discover the world of water engineering through fun-filled, hands-on activities. Come watch "The Lego Movie" at 12:30 p.m. and see the winning Star Wars Lego parade float. Call 915-621-2005 for more information.

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