

## Greetings

I hope you're well, and also that you will be able to meet with family later in the month for Thanksgiving.

## Meetings and Announcements

### UCCE Kern County Office Situation--UCCE is still working!

Our office on Mt. Vernon Ave. is currently open to the public. **In accordance with the public health emergency declared by the County of Kern, all visitors are required to wear face coverings in all public places until further notice.** Many of us advisors will be alternately in the office and working from home, and I have answered many questions via email, and new queries come in regularly from Kern residents as well as from those who live much further away. Email is the best way to reach me, my address is [jfkarlik@ucanr.edu](mailto:jfkarlik@ucanr.edu).

### Weekly Zoom Presentation: Gardens and Design Resumes

In October I resumed making weekly Zoom presentations on gardens and landscape design, augmented with a bit of history. These presentations are Thursdays at 4:30 pm, and are mostly based on photos from our past horticultural tours. The next presentation, November 12, will focus on landscapes and design of Imperial Rome and Pompeii. The following week, November 19, we plan to visit Istanbul. The meeting ID and password remain the same. If you didn't receive, please send me an email, [jfkarlik@ucanr.edu](mailto:jfkarlik@ucanr.edu), and I'll send you the Zoom connection info.

### 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Landscape Management Seminar

We do plan to offer our annual spring landscape management seminar. I doubt we will be able to meet in person, so likely it will be by Zoom. More details to follow in the December and following newsletters.

## Pruning Shade Trees

It's that time of year.

Autumn days bring cooler temperatures, fall color development in the landscape, and the sound of chain saws echoing through city streets. Although shade trees may be pruned in autumn as a matter of routine, pruning should not be considered an annual

necessity, especially if structure has been established when trees were young. Many shade trees will grow well without annual pruning, and severe pruning is damaging to most tree species. The first question to ask before pruning is “Why?” Pruning should proceed only if specific reasons exist and clear goals have been established.

Pruning may be required for the following reasons:

- **Structure:** Shade trees should have a central leader with scaffold branches spaced one to three feet apart. Branches should have wide angles of attachment to the trunk. Competing branches should be removed. Establish a dominant leader by shortening competing leaders, especially in young trees.
- **Health:** Diseased, damaged or rubbing branches can be removed.
- **Safety:** Branches which pose a hazard should be removed. Examples are branches that interfere with driver visibility at street corners and those which hang low over sidewalks. The sail area of trees may also be reduced to lessen the chances of uprooting during windstorms.
- **Appearance:** Many trees have interesting trunk and scaffold forms. Exposing the form of the tree can enhance its appearance. Trees that have been pruned correctly retain a ‘natural’ appearance and usually don’t obviously look as though they have been pruned.

Two types of pruning cuts, *heading* and *thinning* cuts, should be used. These have opposite effects on tree structure, and in most situations pruning should be done with a combination of both. A heading cut shortens branches and removes the terminal bud. The terminal bud (at the end of a branch) is dominant (apical dominance) and governs growth of laterals. If the terminal bud or shoot is removed, lateral buds will break and lateral branches will grow faster; therefore, bushy growth results. Heading main branches to the same point every year, as is often done with mulberries, is known as pollarding. The resulting numerous branches are weakly attached and do not extend to great height nor block out much sky. In northern Europe, sunlight is at a premium and pollarded trees provide ornament in city squares. However, pollarding dwarfs trees and limits shade, and some species can be killed outright by this practice. The popularity of the pollarding style in Bakersfield is perhaps a triumph of tradition over thinking.

A thinning cut removes a smaller branch at the place of attachment to a larger branch. Thinning opens the tree crown while retaining larger limbs, and preserves a “natural” appearance of the crown. Many trees, including pines, oaks, and magnolias, respond poorly to heading cuts and new branches originate with difficulty. These tree species, especially, should be thinned and not headed, if pruned at all. Keep the central leader and key structural branches to preserve a framework within the tree crown.

The placement of the pruning cut directly affects how much decay may later occur in the trunk. Trees do not have a healing process comparable to what occurs in animals or people. Damaged tissue is not repaired but rather sealed, i.e., compartmentalized, followed by growth of replacement tissue. The first line of defense of trees against decay fungi is a layer of tissue identified by the branch bark ridge, visible in some species as a raised collar close to the trunk around each branch. A cut should be made just outside this ridge. The former practice of cutting branches as closely as possible to the trunk did produce callus growth, but the first line of defense was breached, allowing decay-producing organisms to enter. When a tree is topped, several lines of defense are breached, and direct entry to the heartwood of the tree is possible for decay fungi. Therefore, topping should be

avoided unless absolutely necessary. If severe topping is necessary, perhaps tree removal is a better choice followed by replanting of a smaller species.

*John Karlik*  
*Environmental Horticulture/Environmental Science*

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