

The Gardener's Dirt

February 2020

Theme: Seasonal Pruning

Feature Article:

Prune the [Saturated] Fat from your Diet

by Cassidy Hall, Area Agent, Family and Consumer Science



EAT MORE OF THIS



EAT LESS OF THAT

We live in a world full of dietary advice at our fingertips, but unfortunately, that advice is not always received from experts. In my Extension role, participants often clue me in on trendy dietary advice. Currently, "healthy fat" is a hot topic. What are healthy fats? Should we still be pruning fat from our diets, or is that old news?

Let's start with discussing if we should be pruning fat from our diets- the answer is "it depends." Our bodies require fat as a source of energy. Fat is essential for our bodies to absorb nutrients, produce hormones, it helps to protect the organs, and aids in keeping us warm (American Heart Association). We absolutely need fat, but like calories, all fats are not equal.

This leads to the question of determining which fats are "healthy fats."

Healthy fats tend to come from plant sources with a few exceptions. Olive oil, canola oil, nuts, seeds, and avocados are examples of healthy fats that come from plants. Notice that I did not include coconut oil. Tropical oils such as palm oil and coconut oil are sources composed primarily of saturated fat which make them solid at room temperature. Coconut oil is all the rage right now, trending as a 'healthy fat.' This claim is not backed by science, the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nor the American Heart Association. Why not? When you read the label, coconut oil has 14g of total fat. Of the 14g of total fat, 13g are saturated. When you compare this solid fat to olive oil, olive oil also has 14g of total fat, but only 2-2.5g of saturated fat. Due to the difference in saturated fat content, coconut oil is solid at room temperature while olive oil remains liquid. Thus, healthy fats are liquid at room temperature.

According to the AHA, saturated fat leads to increased LDL [bad] cholesterol levels while unsaturated fats can help improve cholesterol levels by increasing HDL [good] cholesterol. So how much is too much fat? Again, "it depends."

A family member recently took an online quiz to see what recommendations she'd be given if she chose to follow the Ketogenic Diet. Let me pause to mention that the recent keto diet obsession is not backed by medical professionals or dieticians due to its extreme fat content and negative effect on kidney function. The quiz results revealed that based on a 1,200 calorie diet, my family member 'should' consume 97g of fat. This is far off from the American Heart Association's recommendations!

According to the American Dietary Guidelines, no more than 65g of total fat are recommended for a 2,000 calorie diet. The American Journal of Nutrition recommends between 20%-30% of calories should come from total fat. The American Heart Association recommends that no more than 5-6% of calories should come from saturated fat. There are 9 calories per gram of fat, so based on a 2,000-calorie diet, no more than 120 calories should come from saturated fat which equates to about 13g of saturated fat. Keep in mind that 2,000 calories is the average recommendation for adult males. Women, on average, require 1,800 calories.

Swapping fats during cooking is a first step in reducing your saturated fat consumption. Instead of using butter or coconut oil, use liquid oils. When making your dairy selections, choosing low-fat or light dairy helps you to get the same protein, calcium, and nutrients without the saturated fat and extra calories. Choose lean cuts of meat with less marbling and visible fat as well as more beans, nuts, and seeds. Pruning the [saturated] fat from your diet is a huge step in heart-health maintenance!

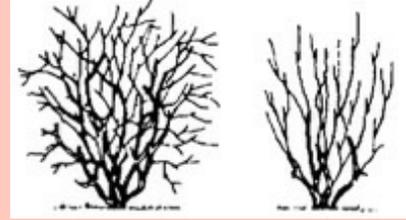
[Prune the Saturated Fat from your Diet \(black and white document\)](#)

Landscape Maintenance:

Pruning - Get Ready for the Season



Pruning Trees



Pruning Shrubs

Why do we prune? The main reasons for pruning are: to train the plant; maintain plant health; improve its quality; and to restrict growth. We prune to remove or reduce plant material that is not required (like dead wood), that is no longer effective (like undergrowth or growing in the wrong direction), or that is of no use to the plant (like suckers). It is done to supply energy for the development of flowers, fruits, and limbs that remain on the plant. It should be done with the plants natural shape and size in mind.

Pruning should always consider timing. Too often we get overwhelmed by too much growth, so we attack. It could be 95 degrees in July, with no rain in sight. Wouldn't you be stressed? Continued pruning at the wrong time won't kill a plant, but it could weaken it, over time. Late winter is a great time to shape up your landscape, while the plants are still dormant. This is especially true for evergreens and deciduous shrubs that bloom on new stems in the summer, like beautyberry. Now is not the time to prune shrubs that bloom in spring, like azaleas, forsythia or magnolias. Wait until after they have bloomed. This link gives you a chart of plants and when to prune.

https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/430/430-462/430-462_pdf

To minimize stress, prune on a mild winter day, and be mindful of any upcoming freezing weather. If it hasn't rained or rain is not in the forecast, water after you prune. Use clean sharp pruners or loppers, making clean cuts at a leaf/stem node. For branches, use a pruning saw, cutting where the branch meets another branch. As the weather warms, the plant will put out new growth.

Late winter is also the time to prune (and I said "prune" not hack) crape myrtles. Focus on opening up the middle of the tree and maintaining the vase-like shape. Remove limbs growing toward the inside of the tree which impede air flow which can contribute to disease. Internal or "wacky" limbs have a tendency to grow into another limb, and fuse together, making it nearly impossible to remove later. Here is a publication on how to prune a crape myrtle and an article on what happens when you hack one.

<https://pender.ces.ncsu.edu/2013/02/how-do-i-prune-crape-myrtle/>

<http://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/2018/11/21/why-butcher-a-nice-crape-myrtle/>

I had a poor looking evergreen shrub that I wanted to remove. I cut off most of the limbs to about 2 feet to make it easier to dig out. Only I never got around to digging it out. That was 3 years ago and it is back to 5 feet high and flowering. Although my goal was removal, what I actually did was rejuvenation pruning. Had I intended for the shrub to remain, I could have cut out the dead limbs, and anything that looked out of place. Removing some of the lower branches would have increased air flow to the center of the plant. The plant would have kept its basic shape and the result would have been new growth where cuts were made.

Remember the reason we prune is to improve appearance and sustainability. If the plant is too big for its space, consider removing it or rejuvenation. Prune and re-form, don't hack and deform!

Pruning Get Ready for the Season (black and white document)

Small Fruits:

Blueberries: Prune & Prepare for the Season

How to produce large, abundant berries so you'll be the envy of your neighbors.

By: Marshall Warren, Horticulture Agent, Johnston County



Photo Courtesy Marshall Warren

"I wish I had known then what I know now." Have you ever said that before? Many years ago when I planted 30 Rabbiteye blueberry bushes in my yard, there were several things I did right but many things I did wrong and continued to do wrong for several years. Because of this, my plants and berry yields suffered. It wasn't until I became a Johnston County Horticulture Extension Agent and took a graduate course on plant fertility, participated in several lectures and demonstrations with Dr. Bill Cline, a blueberry specialist, was I able to correct my errors and produce numerous large berries as seen in the photo.

As always, it's best to start from the ground up. Start by taking a soil test. It's important to prepare your soil many months before planting. Rabbiteye blueberries grow best in our area in well-drained acidic soil with plenty of organic matter. Blueberries require a soil pH of 4.0 to 5.3 to thrive. If soil test results show your soil pH is over 5.5, you may need to lower the pH by applying sulfur to the soil. To determine how much sulfur: <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/changing-the-ph-of-your-soil/>

- Choose a sunny location
- Avoid heavy clay soils

- Make a raised bed or row by adding copious amounts of pine bark mulch, and maybe some peat moss.
- The bedded area should be raised and "fluffy" enough to plant with bare hands.

For better pollination and larger berries, plant several Rabbiteye blueberry cultivars. Some cultivars to consider are Premier, Climax, Brightwell, Tifblue, Powderblue, Vernon, Krewer, Alapha, Columbus, Ira, Ochlockonee, and Onslow.

Plant dormant bushes in late winter (Feb-Mar) and prune at planting to reduce height by one-half to two-thirds and remove all flower buds to prevent fruit production in the first year, so the plants can focus on growing. Providing irrigation is essential for establishment, survival, and large fruit. Having a layer of mulch will help retain soil moisture and reduce weeds - pine straw and pine bark mulches are ideal.

For Dr. Bill Cline's detailed instructions on pruning young blueberry bushes:

<https://growingsmallfarms.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Pruning-Blueberries-25JAN14.pdf?fwd=no>

Selectively pruning blueberry bushes each year in late winter will keep plants shorter, healthier, and more productive. Remove any broken, diseased, low hanging, crossing or spindly growth. Once plants reach 4-5 years old, prune away spreading sucker growth to define the crown, and 3 to 4 of the largest, oldest canes to open the center. Remove the limbs that contain the third years' growth which have the thin, twiggy "matchstick" wood. You will keep the first- and second-years' growth which will have the largest berries. Flower buds that will produce the next crop are formed in late summer and early fall on the current season's growth. Don't prune away the upper portions of these limbs because that will be where next year's berries are produced.

Neglected bushes may have old canes covered in lichens. These old bushes can be rejuvenated back into production by pruning back the older canes hard to encourage new growth. Cut the canes (or stems) back as close to ground level as possible to encourage the production of new, vigorous growth. Instead of pruning away all the older canes at once, cut out 1/3 of the canes each year for three consecutive years.

Fertilizer applications should be based on your soil test results. Fertilizer uptake efficiency of blueberries from granular products is low, and thus multiple light applications are recommended because they are easily damaged by excess fertilizer. Adding more fertilizer will not compensate for other limiting factors. Begin fertilization at leaf-out in spring and apply every 4-6 weeks (granular) until mid to late summer to allow time for the plants to harden off before winter. If your soil test results are where they should be, use either urea (46-0-0) or ammonium sulfate (21-0-0-24S) and maintain pH at 4.0 to 5.0, and phosphorus and potassium in the sufficiency range.

See fertilizer section for application rates: <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/growing-blueberries-in-the-home-garden>

With mature bushes, nitrogen requirement increases with plant age, but fertilize enough to keep the bushes healthy, but reduce the bush vigor. Rabbiteye bushes with medium green foliage are often more productive than bushes that are dark green. Dark green bushes produce excessive vegetative growth and fewer flower buds. Mature rabbiteyes generally need only two fertilizations per year.

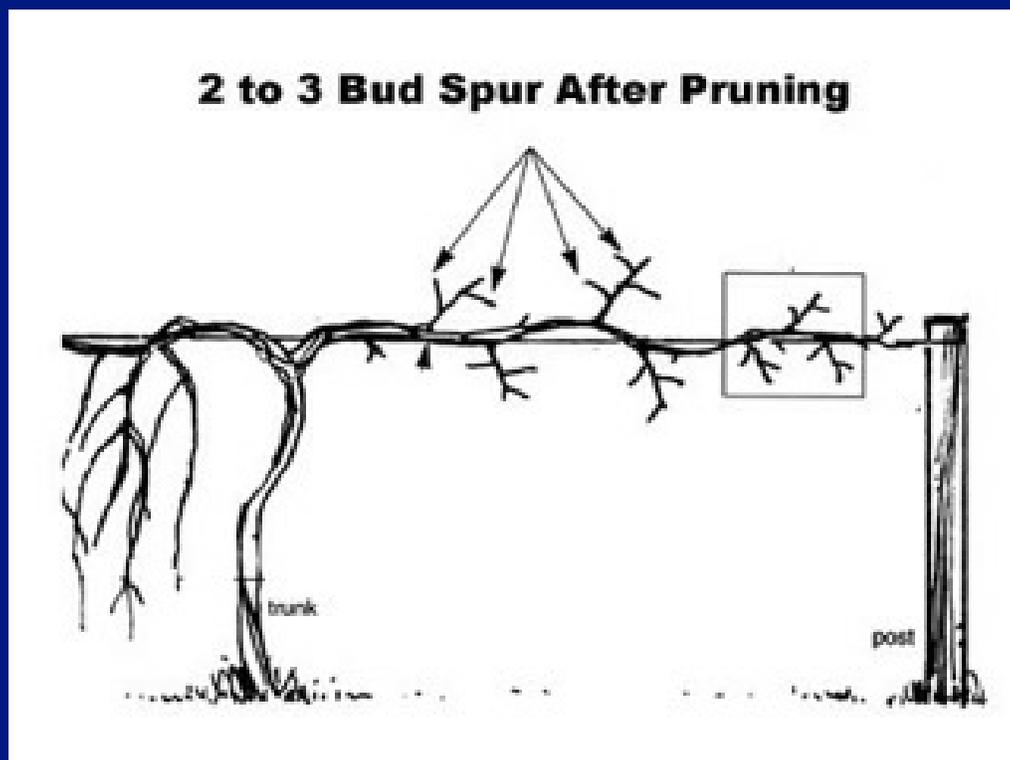
To produce large fruit and be the envy of your neighbors, please join us for the upcoming Blueberry and Grape Production and Pruning Workshop on February 8th, from 1:30 to 5:00 pm at the Johnston County Ag. Center, 2736 NC 210 Hwy, Smithfield NC 27577. Follow the link for more information:

<https://johnston.ces.ncsu.edu/2019/10/blueberry-grape-production-pruning-introductory-workshop/>

[Blueberries: Prune & Prepare for the Season \(black and white document\)](#)

Pruning Your Muscadine Grape Vines

by Brandon Parker, Agriculture-Commercial Horticulture Agent



For many of you who have grape vines the idea of pruning them may be scary if you have never done so or have only clipped a few vine tips off in the past. This I would say is normal, but do not worry as this is not a hard task to learn.

Grapes like most fruit crops are grown from the past seasons vine growth, that is why it is essential to manage and take out older vines every winter in January or February that are not productive. These non-productive vines only create a jungle of woody vines and leaves in the growing season which shade and prevent adequate airflow around the growing fruit, promoting disease and pest issues, plus make harvest of your fruit much more difficult.

To prune your vines, cut the one-year old wood back to where only 2 to 3 buds remain, this typically is around 3 to 4 inches from the main cordon which is typically running along a support wire you have provided. Also, you should leave 5 to 6 inches between the vines coming off the cordon, some vines may need to be completely cut back to achieve this. A good rule to use is to cut vines back to where the remaining stem is similar to the size of a #2 pencil in diameter, anything smaller than that should be removed as it will likely produce smaller, inferior fruit.

Muscadine grapes are truly a hardy plant for our area and typically do not require extra attention that other plants in our area may, but with a yearly pruning you will help find the full potential of your grape vine for years to come.

If you would like attend a hands-on pruning demonstration, we will be hosting a blueberry and grape production and pruning workshop at the Johnston County Ag. Center on Feb 8th, 2020 from 1:30 to 5:00 p.m., see link below.

Grape and Blueberry Production and Pruning Workshop

For more information on Muscadine Grapes-

https://grapes.ces.ncsu.edu/muscadine_grape_production/



Before and after pruning a Muscadine grape vine. Pictures courtesy of Connie Fisk, NC State University

[Pruning Your Muscadine Grape Vines \(black and white version\)](#)

Quick Tip:

Pruning Brings Forth Your Landscaping Visions aka Horticultural Sculpting

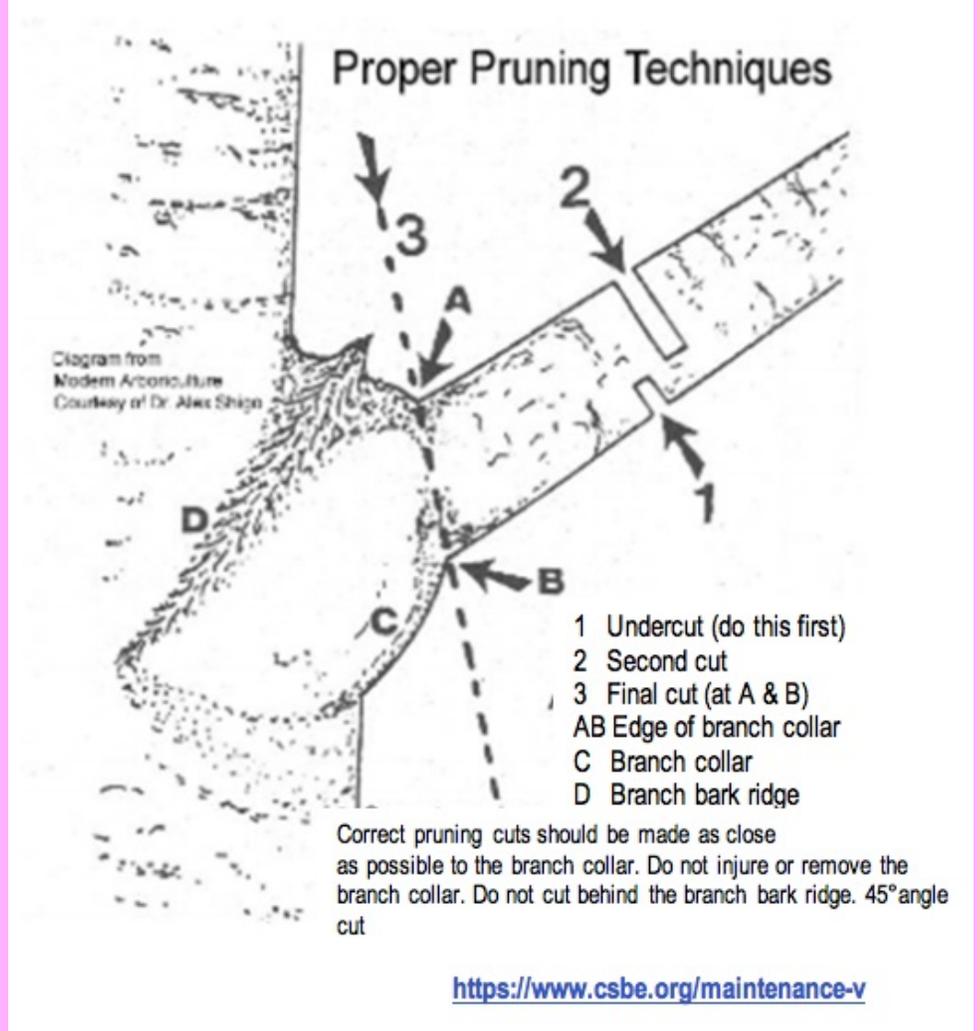
by Barb Barakat, EMGV



Camellia pruned into a shrub



Camellia pruned into a multi-trunked tree



<https://www.csbe.org/maintenance-v>

It is easiest to start a tree from a one-year-old shrub, but most of us didn't think of it until after that. You can apply the same principles to older, mature plants; it'll take several years, as only 30% of the total growth can be pruned back in any one year. The interest and accent that small blooming trees lend to your landscape make it worth the extra effort.

1. Tools: lopping shears, pruning saw, pruning shears, stake, soft twine
2. Select one to three of the most vigorous growing branches (depending on the number of main trunks desired) and prune all other branches to ground level.
3. Remove lateral branches that are fewer than 4 feet off the ground along the main trunk and thin the canopy by getting rid of inward growing branches or branches that cross one another. Avoid shearing, unless you want a high-maintenance topiary.
4. With soft twine tie the new 'trunks' to a stake to encourage straight, upward growth.

Cited from: University of Georgia <https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=B961&title=Pruning%20Ornamental%20Plants%20in%20the%20Landscape#Specialty>

Pruning Brings Forth Your Landscape Visions (black and white document)

February Gardening Tasks



Biltmore Estate

EDIBLES

- Asparagus crowns can be planted now through March.
- Transplant cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower out into the garden.
- Strawberry plants can be planted now for spring fruits.
- Beets, carrots, peas, lettuce, mustard, radish, spinach, Irish potatoes, and turnips can be sown outside.
- Starting seeds indoors is easy and economical. Sometimes it is the only way to get the color or variety of the plants you want to grow. It is not necessary to use "grow lights", ordinary fluorescent tubes will usually be enough.
- February and March are good months to prune fruit trees.
- It is time to start a spray program for peach trees to control the many diseases and insects that attack peaches.

INSECTS

- Control overwintering insects such as scale and their eggs by hand picking or using a dormant oil spray (also known as horticultural oil). Be sure to check for scales before spraying. Follow the manufacturer's directions when applying any pesticide. Do not apply dormant oils to broadleaf evergreens when freezing temperatures are expected.
- Cool-weather mites are not visible to the naked eye. Junipers and other needled evergreens are a favorite hangout of these mites. If you had some of these plants that were an unsightly brown last year, check them with a hand-held magnifying glass to see if cool season mites are to blame. Horticultural oil or other registered insecticides can improve their situation and appearance.

TREES, SHRUBS, & ORNAMENTALS

- *Cut back dormant ornamental grasses to about 10 to 14 inches above the soil before new growth starts. Evergreen ornamental grasses (or grass-like ornamentals) such as Liriope and Mondo Grass should be cut short or mowed to remove last year's unsightly foliage. If the clumps have become too big for the area they can be divided and shared with friends or planted in other areas of the yard.*
- Summer blooming shrubs bloom on new growth so they can be pruned hard in February to encourage new growth and more flowers. Examples include Abelia, Hibiscus, Hydrangea, Beautyberry, Butterfly bush, Althea, Rose of Sharon, and bush

or Tea Roses.

- Spring blooming shrubs such as Azaleas, Rhododendrons, Forsythia, Spirea, Quince, Weigela, and Climbing Roses bloom on last year's growth and should not be pruned until after they have flowered.
- Deciduous trees, especially those that bloom in the spring, should not be pruned this time of the year. Examples being Dogwoods, Red Buds, Maples and several others.
- Wait to prune the dead stems of hardy lantana until you begin to see new growth emerge in the spring. The dead stems help keep it winter hardy.
- For many evergreens this is the best time of the year to prune if they haven't been pruned already.
- Summer blooming roses can be pruned this time of the year. Remember not to remove more than 1/3 of the growth. Remove old mulch and leaves from around plants as this removes many overwintering fungal spores. Put down fresh mulch.
- *Bare root roses and trees can be planted this time of the year. Soak the roots overnight to rehydrate them before planting.*
- Spring flowers such as Sweet Williams, Pansy, Viola, Calendula, Forget-Me-Nots, English Daisies, Poppy, Alyssum and Dianthus can be planted now. Don't forget to deadhead pansies and fertilize toward the end of the month.

LAWN CARE

- Cool season grasses should be fertilized mid-month. If a soil sample has not been taken, use a fertilizer of at least 30% slow release nitrogen at the rate of 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.
- Crabgrass usually will start to germinate about the same time the Forsythia blooms. If you have had problems with crabgrass in the past, then you may want to apply crabgrass preventer (pre-emergence herbicide) when the Forsythia blooms.
- Digging up wild onion/wild garlic is the best way to get rid of these pesky bulbs, but make sure you get the bulb. If there are too many to dig up, a product with 2,4-D works well for control. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's directions found on the label. Complete control may take two or more years. Apply 2,4-D at half the recommended rate on centipede lawns otherwise it will damage the grass.
- Check out the [various turfgrasses](#) for your area and learn how best to care for it.

Click on each type of grass for individual maintenance calendar:

- [Bermuda](#)
- [Centipede](#)
- [Zoysiagrass](#)
- [St. Augustine Grass](#)
- [Tall Fescue](#)

- For cool season grasses, mow to 3 inches and remove leaves and other debris.
- NEVER burn off centipedegrass to remove excess debris

- Cool-season weeds in established dormant Zoysia or Bermuda grass lawns may be treated with broadleaf herbicides.

Cool Connections:



Atlantic Beach Snow

Helpful Links from Johnston County Cooperative Extension

****NEW* Cool Connections - Gardening Resources for ALL!***

Basic Steps for Home Landscaping

Carolina Lawns

NC Extension Gardener Handbook

Vegetable Gardening: A Beginners Guide

Upcoming Events:

Blueberry & Grape Production & Pruning Workshop

February 8th, 2020 from 1:30 - 5:00 PM

Join Johnston County Cooperative Extension and NCSU Extension Specialist Dr. Bill Cline for an introductory workshop on blueberry and grape production and pruning on Saturday, February 8th, 2020 from 1:30 - 5:00 PM at the Johnston County Agricultural Center (2736 NC 210 Hwy., Smithfield 27577). Topics include cultivar selection, budgeting, site establishment (soil conditions and planting), fertilization, irrigation, pruning, harvesting, and resources for pest control. Workshop includes a lecture followed by a pruning demonstration at a local farm. The program is aimed at farmers considering establishing "pick-your-own" operations as well as home gardeners.

There is no cost to attend the workshop.

Dress for probable cold weather for the outdoor pruning demonstration.

**For accommodations for persons with disabilities,
contact Marshall Warren at 919-989-5380.**

For more information on growing and pruning blueberries, visit

NC State Blueberry Portal at:

<https://blueberries.ces.ncsu.edu/>



Muscadine Grape Production:

https://grapes.ces.ncsu.edu/muscadine_grape_production/



Fruit & Nut Tree Workshop

Saturday, February 22, 2019 from 10 am to 12 pm.



Class workshop on fruit and nut trees by Dr. Mike Parker. This event will be located at Central Crops Research Station, 13223 US 70 West, Clayton, NC 27520-2128. If you have any questions about this event, please contact our office at (919) 989-5380. Thank you.

For more information visit:

[N.C. Cooperative Extension of Johnston County Website](#)



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NC State and N.C. A&T State universities are collectively committed to positive action to secure equal opportunity and prohibit discrimination and harassment regardless of age, color, disability, family and marital status, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, political beliefs, race, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation and veteran status. NC State, N.C. A&T, USDA and local governments cooperating.

Accommodation requests related to a disability should be made 7 days prior to any event by contacting:
Bryant Spivey at 919-989-5380 or by email bmspivey@ncsu.edu.

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