Prudent Pruning of Trees and Shrubs

What is pruning?
Pruning is the removal of a plant part for a specific purpose.

Why prune?
To maintain plant health
To rejuvenate shrubs to promote flowering or fruit

What to prune:
Dead and dying branches can be removed at any time.
Crossing or rubbing branches best removed when dormant
Storm damaged branches after occurrence
Watersprouts and suckers in spring

When to prune:
Late winter or early spring is the general rule
Immediately after flowering for spring blooming shrubs
After spring growth stops for broadleaf evergreens, when needed
Dormant season for summer flowering shrubs
Late June for narrowleaf evergreens to remove a third of new growth

How to prune:
Use clean, sharp tools.
Use hand by-pass pruners for small branches.
Use lopping pruners (by-pass) for larger branches (<1.5 inches).
Use pruning saws for branches over 1 inch.
Cut on an angle to the nearest healthy leaf, bud or trunk.
Avoid leaving stubs that may host disease or insects.
Allow pruning wound to heal without paint.

Hire professionals for large trees and dangerous places.

Checklist for March

- Begin your spring garden clean-up.
- Start indoor seeds that require 10-12 weeks before transplanting. Use only sterilized potting mix and clean pots.
- There is time to have your soil tested by the county agricultural extension. Vegetables grow best in soil with a pH of 6-6.5; grass in a pH of 6-7.0. Amend as indicated.
- Add 4-6” of compost to your planting beds and thoroughly work into your soil.
- Prune all plant material to remove diseased, dead, weak or crossing branches. Complete pruning trees before new growth begins.
- Plant peas on St. Patrick’s Day when the soil can be worked.
- Cut back remaining ornamental grasses to about 6”.
- To dispose of pesticides and other waste, check for your town’s Spring Ocean County Hazardous Waste Day schedule at www.co.ocean.nj.us/recycle or call 732-506-5047.

Barnegat Bay is a watershed in which any raindrop that falls will eventually find its way by means of river, creek, or groundwater into it. This includes every town in Ocean County, including the inland towns.