

GRIST

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Improved Bag Design Provides Easier Shelter Access

by Ted Putnam

Wildland fire agencies make it mandatory for their firefighters to carry fire shelters on the fireline. These shelters are folded and enclosed in a protective plastic bag and they are deployed by pulling a red ring on the bag. As a result of several years of reviewing fire shelter deployments, the U.S. Forest Service's Missoula Technology and Development Center fire equipment staff in Missoula, Montana, has added a second red pull-ring to the protective plastic bag that holds the fire shelter. Further, it has changed the tear strip so it runs completely around the bag from pull-ring to pull-ring. (On the current single pull-ring bags, the tear strip ends at the bottom of the bag.)

These design improvements make it easier to open the bag while wearing gloves. When the tear strip is completely removed, the

fire shelter almost falls out the bottom of the bag. Further, the two pull-rings make bag openings more reliable. Should one pull-ring fail or one end of the tear strip not separate easily from the bag, the second pull-ring can be used. Double pull-rings also mean that if one side

of the bag is exposed to too much radiant heat, which causes the plastic to stretch instead of tear, the bag can still be opened with the pull-ring on the unexposed side.

Double pull-ring plastic bags are now standard issue on all



A fully-deployed fire shelter. Photo credit: U.S. Forest Service



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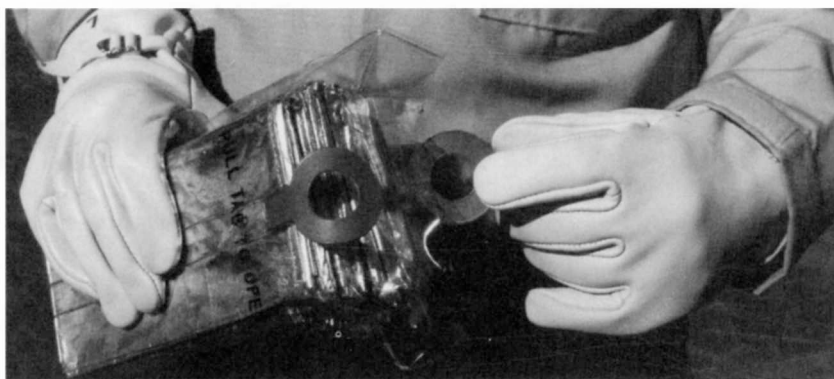
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New plastic bag has two red pull-rings for more reliable openings.
Photo credit: U.S. Forest Service

fire shelters manufactured beginning in 1995. Because shelters with the one pull-ring design will be in service for years, it is important that firefighters know which type of fire shelter bag they are carrying so they can initiate the appropriate opening sequence in an emergency. Also beginning in 1995, all shelter components — shelter plastic bag, liner and carrying case — will comply with the National Fire Protection Association wildland fire equip-

ment standard (NFPA 1977-1993). Note that fire shelters manufactured before 1995 offer the same level of protection as the new shelters and do not have to be replaced until they begin showing wear. 

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The tear strip runs around the entire bag from one pull ring to the other.
U.S. Forest Service

NSPR "Best of GRIST" Awards

The National Society for Park Resources (NSPR) "Best of GRIST" Awards for 1995 were announced at the annual NSPR Awards Breakfast and General Membership Meeting in October 1995 in San Antonio, Texas. This meeting is convened at the annual National Recreation and Park Association's Congress which is held in various cities throughout the United States. Award winners receive certificate and cash awards.

First Place - \$250

"Portable Generator"

Scott D. Straub and Len Fisher, both recently retired from Pennsylvania Power & Light Company, shared the first place award for making a generator portable by mounting a generator on a wheel barrow frame. The idea was developed when small power tools were needed to perform trail work in remote or backcountry areas.

Second Place - \$125

"Moveable Parking Tarps for Persons with Disabilities"

John Seger, Maintenance Supervisor at Homestead National Monument of America in Beatrice, Nebraska, received the second place award for his idea for moveable parking tarps. These tarps are used when special events held at the park make it necessary to

have more parking spaces available for persons with disabilities than the original designated number.

Third Place - \$75

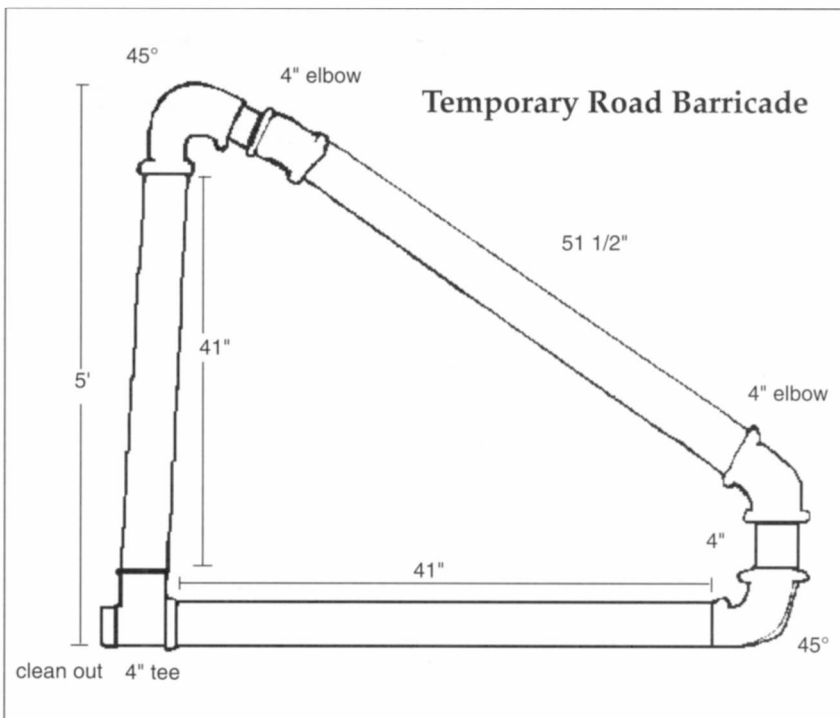
"Temporary Road Barricade"

Craig Cartwright, Roads and Grounds Foreman at Antietam National Battlefield in Sharpsburg, Maryland, was awarded third place for his temporary road barricade idea. This barricade can be easily taken apart for movement and storage and has clean-outs for installation of ballast material if needed to prevent movement.

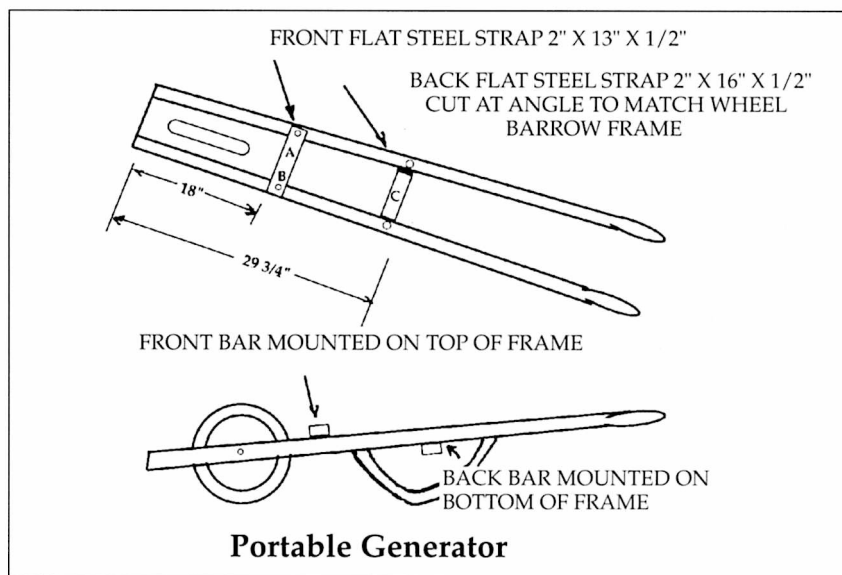
Ms. Sharon Hubler, Executive Director of the Idaho Foundation for Parks and



Sharon Hubler announcing the names of the "Best of GRIST" Awards.



Lands and Secretary-Treasurer for NSPR chaired the NSPR award selection committee and announced the award winners at the San Antonio breakfast meeting. Each year the National Society for Park Resources, a professional branch of the National Recreation and Park Association, recognizes the persons and/or agencies who contributed the three articles considered "the best" that were published in the four previous issues of GRIST (Summer and Fall 1994 and Winter and Spring 1995). 



Hand Warmer

Chad M. Converse with the Chugach National Forest in Alaska came up with an idea to create a great hand or foot warmer. For those persons who may have access to dry kernel corn, all you do is put some dried corn kernels into a cloth bag (cotton is probably best) and sew it shut. Don't overfill the bag — leave a little space in the bag so the corn has room to move around. Warm the corn bag in a microwave and place it on your hand, foot or a sore part of your body. The extra space left in the bag enables the corn to move and adjust to the contour of your body. The corn bag can

be reused many times just by re-heating in the microwave. (Remember, DO NOT use pop corn or it will pop in the microwave.)

What is dry kernel corn? If you grow sweet corn in your garden you can let some ears mature (become dented) and then bring them inside to a warm room to finish drying. It takes approximately one month to complete the drying process. You can then easily take the kernels off the cob.

Or, if you are in farming country you can visit your local corn farmer and ask for a few ears of his dried field corn. (You will

have to take the kernels off the cob yourself.) Or, the local grain elevator and/or seed corn dealer may have some shelled corn (corn already off the cob) that they would give or sell to you. Field corn is relatively inexpensive and brings little profit per bushel to the farmer.



This article first appeared in the USDA Forest Service's Recycling News, Vol. 6, No. 9. The goal of this newsletter is to keep Forest Service recyclers informed of recycling issues and information both within and outside the agency. They encourage an open forum and welcome a diversity of opinions and issues.

Moving Pipes

James Lentz and Roy Painter, maintenance employees at Shenandoah National Park, were concerned about the method being used to move large pipes during the loading, unloading or installing process. A chain was hooked onto the pipe at a joint situated in the middle of the pipe. The pipe was then lifted and guided by a person to the location where the pipe was to be placed. This method created a hazard to employees and anyone else working or standing above ground or in the ditch where the pipe was to be placed. Lentz and Painter made an attachment to lift, move and install the pipe in a safer manner.

They took two pieces of pipe, each 26 in. x 4 in. and welded a 3 3/8-in. clevis to the end of each pipe. These pieces would be used as "plugs" to be inserted at each end of the pipe which is to be moved. They attached a 24 5/16-ft. chain to the clevis on each pipe, attached a 1 1/2-in. swivel hook in the middle of the chain with another 6 ft. of chain extending above and 9 5/16-ft. of chain extending below the center. The 9 5/16-ft. portion of chain hanging downwards is looped around the center of the pipe being moved as a safety and balancing device.

Once the pipe is hooked up to this chain attachment the maintenance staff has the ability to remove either plug and still

balance the pipe. Further, they can move the pipe easily and safely with very little manual help needed. 🏠

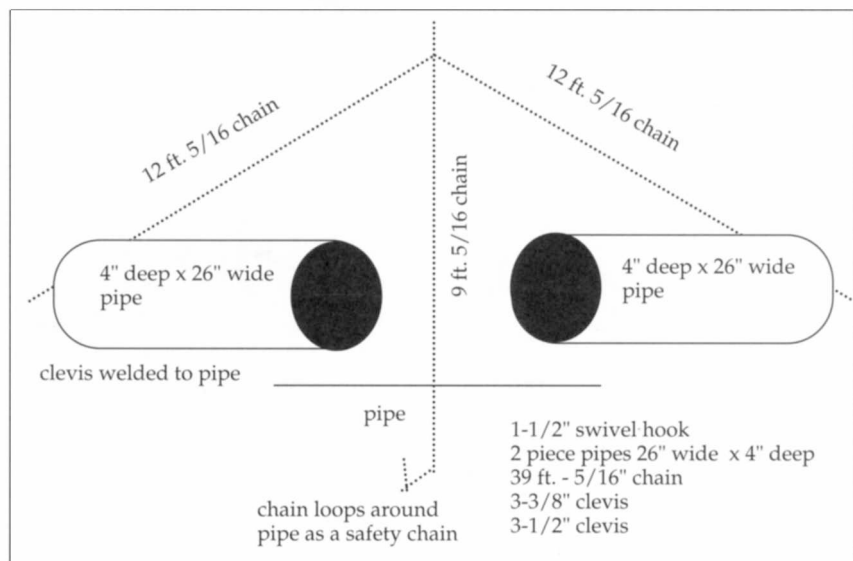
Our sincere appreciation to James Lentz and Roy Painter for sharing this clever device with GRIST subscribers and readers.



Setting pipe into a ditch. Pipe has no way of slipping.



Installing pipe in the ditch using the safety chain as leverage to push pipe.



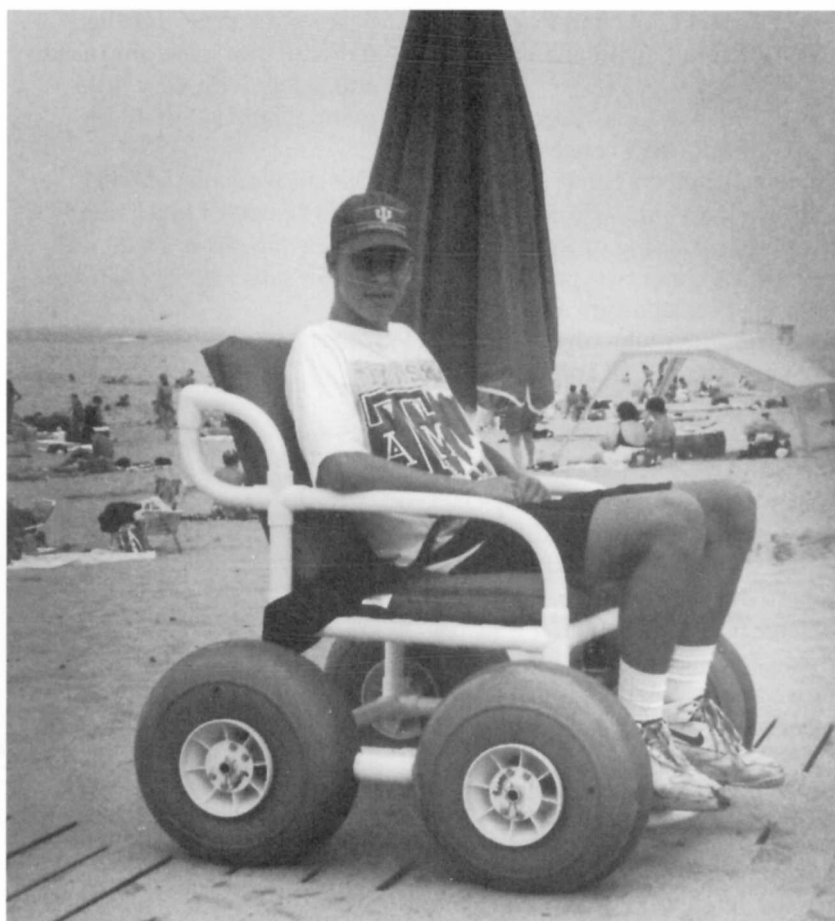
Access to Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore

Over the past few decades persons with disabilities are increasingly participating in a variety of outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, camping, picnicking, fishing, boating and water-based recreation. It is estimated that over 43 million Americans have some type of major disability.

In 1980, the National Park Service became the first federal agency to implement policies emphasizing accessibility. As a result, national parks and areas strive to offer a broad spectrum of opportunities to all persons. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore is one such example. Located in northwest Indiana, along the southern shore of Lake Michigan, Indiana Dunes offers natural, cultural, historical and recreational areas. It is comprised of some 15,000 acres and within its boundaries a variety of natural communities are preserved. Oak savannas, swamps, bogs, marshes, prairies, beech-maple forests, rivers and ponds provide a unique glimpse at the lakeshore's diverse ecosystems. Other features of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore include:

Dorothy Buell Memorial Visitor Center

The Dorothy Buell Memorial Visitor Center has accessible parking, drinking fountains and restroom facilities. An accessible route to the main building runs from the parking lot to the



Sand chair at West Beach. Photo credit: NPS

southern side of the Visitor Center. The Calumet Dune Trail, which starts in the front of the center and winds through a 12,000 year old forested dune complex, is a short (1 km. or 1/2 mile) asphalt-paved trail with gradual inclines. There are a few locations on the trail with slopes greater than 5 percent.

Tactile interpretive exhibits are provided to communicate the interpretive message more effectively to visitors with visu-

al impairments. For visitors with hearing impairments, the introductory audiovisual presentation on the national lakeshore has been fully captioned. And a variety of printed material is available at the information desk upon request. Eastern National Parks and Monuments Association operates an accessible bookstore and sales area. The main information desk has a lowered section to accommodate wheelchairs.

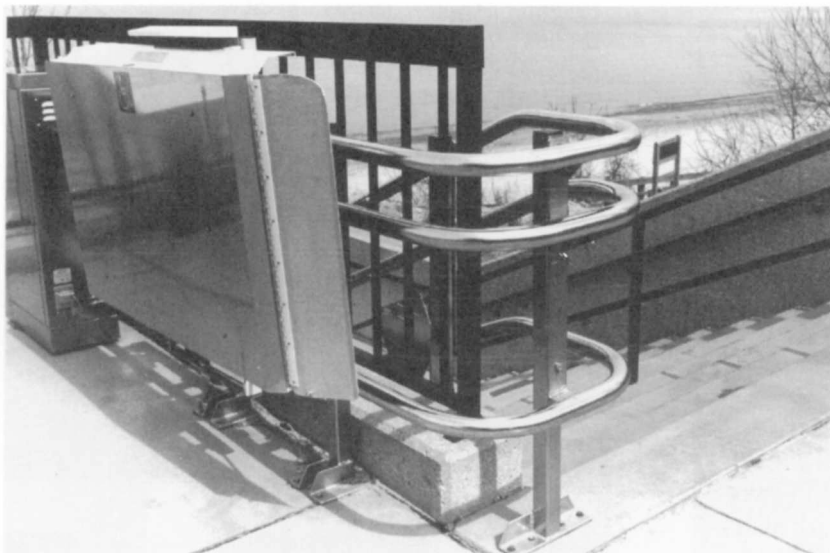
West Beach Visitor Center, Contact Station and Bathhouse

West Beach exhibits the geologic history of the past 14,000 years. Beginning on a bare sand beach and ending in an oak forest, you can trace a

process in nature which took thousands of years to evolve. Tactile exhibits, general information on the rich geological history of the dunes and a variety of other printed materials can be obtained at the Visitor Center or Interpretive Contact Station located in the bathhouse. Both facilities are useable by visitors with mobility impairments.

Marked accessible parking spaces near the West Beach Visitor Center and Interpretive Contact Station are located in the northwest and southwest parking lots. Smooth, hard, slip-resistant paths lead to both facilities. Restrooms, drinking fountains and public showers inside the bathhouse are fully accessible. Bathhouse services are available from Memorial Day through Labor Day. A wooden switchback ramp with railings located on the north side of the bathhouse provides access to the beach area. A wooden deck with benches at

the base of the ramp provide a place to relax and enjoy the surroundings with your family or friends. Rubber meshing along the edges of the platform encourage a static accumulation of sand, providing the sand chair user ease in accessing the beach.



Lakeview wheelchair lift. Photo credit: Kim Holsen.

For visitors wanting to enjoy a meal in pleasant surroundings, accessible picnic shelters and restrooms are located in the southwest parking lot of West Beach. A limited number of picnic tables with extended table top ends are available to easily accommodate wheelchairs.

Limited maneuvering space is available under each picnic shelter. One-eighth of the one-mile Dune Succession Trail originating on the northeast side of the bathhouse is accessible to visitors with mobility impairments. All other trails in the West Beach unit have significant barriers to accessibility due in



Sand chair at West Beach. Photo credit: NPS

most part to the steep slopes and sandy terrain.

Beach Areas

Indiana Dunes has made significant achievements in providing access to beach areas. However, access to the waters of Lake Michigan pose challenging accessibility problems. There are presently three beach areas which are considered accessible: West Beach, Lake View and Porter Beach. All three areas have marked parking spaces, restroom facilities and accessible routes to and onto the beach. Use of a lakeshore "sand chair" can provide entry to the waterfront. All other beach areas have accessible parking and restroom facilities. Routes to these beach and waterfront areas are not possible in a standard wheelchair. Lake View Beach also includes an accessible picnic area, wheelchair lift, drinking fountains and observation deck.

Other areas of interest at the Lakeshore are Dunavood Campground, the Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education and the Bailly Homestead and Chellberg Farm. It is the goal of Indiana Dunes to make these resources accessible to everyone. Further information may be obtained by calling (219) 926-7561 VOICE/TDD or by writing to: Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, 1100 North Mineral Springs Road, Porter, IN 46304. 

This information is reprinted from the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore NPS brochure which was written by Margie Ortiz, Accessibility Coordinator. Bruce Rowe, Environmental Education Program Manager, shared the brochure and photographs with GRIST subscribers and readers.

*Program at Bailly Homestead.
Photo credit: NPS*



Weedeater Vice Bracket

When maintenance staff at Shenandoah National Park needed to repair or adjust a weedeater, two persons were often needed to hold the weedeater secure while a third person made the adjustment or repair. This seemed to be more time-consuming and labor-intensive than should be necessary. Which is why Allen T. Moyer, Engineering Equipment Operator Leader, came up with a device which would greatly improve upon this process.

Moyer developed a bracket which sets between the jaws in

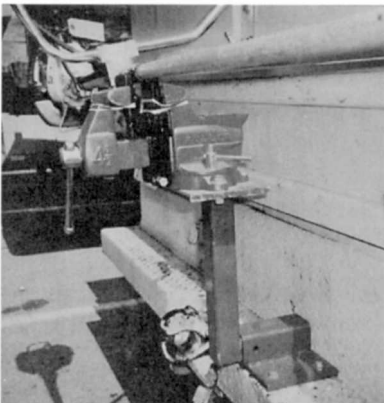
a vice. Two pieces of flat iron are welded to the bottom of the bracket and they slide down over the neck of the vice with a bolt sliding through them. This keeps the bracket from falling off the vice.

The bracket is designed to clamp around the tube portion of the weedeater when the weedeater is placed in the vice, and without crimping the tube. This allows the maintenance staff to have the weedeater setting completely level, or sideways, upside down or in whatever position is needed to perform the needed maintenance. Also, occasionally a very sharp

sawblade is secured to the weedeater head so that staff can cut small brush and trees. The vice bracket will thus eliminate having someone stand close to the blade when adjustments or repairs are being made to the motor.

This bracket eliminates the need for more than one worker to perform needed maintenance on a weedeater. Further, it makes the job safer because the weedeater is held firmly in the vice bracket, and cannot slip. 

Our thanks to Allen Moyer for sharing this idea with GRIST subscribers and readers.



Pruning Plants

Pruning is the selective removal of unwanted plant parts and is necessary in a cultivated landscape, especially park and recreation areas, for many reasons.

Pruning can improve a plant's health by:

- eliminating dead, damaged or diseased wood
- removing weak branches that may break easily in storms, thus creating a hazard to visitors and employees
- removing crossing branches that rub and create open wounds which become easy entryways for insects and disease organisms
- taking off water sprouts and suckers that rob the plant of water and nutrient
- thinning the crown to allow more light penetration and

improve air circulation needed to inhibit some diseases

- stimulating the plant to produce new growth that is usually healthier and more vigorous
- correcting previous improper pruning or shearing.

Pruning can enhance a plant's appearance by:

- eliminating branches that distort the desired form (most often symmetrical shapes are desirable but asymmetrical shapes are appropriate for some specimens, especially if the landscape has an oriental theme)
- creating prolific flower show and fruit display (healthier plants produce more flowers and fruit)

Pruning can improve the plant's function by:

- eliminating branches that are

blocking important views or impeding pedestrian or vehicular traffic

- removing growth that is in conflict with buildings, utilities or other site elements.

Five Reasons for Dormant Pruning

1. The branches and overall structure are easily viewed because there are no leaves.
2. The plant is not actively growing so less stress is placed on the plant.
3. Diseases are not active and are less likely to be spread.
4. Winter is usually a less demanding time of year for the staff and may be a way to earn extra income.
5. Results of pruning are less noticeable and will be less objectionable to the untrained observer or client.

Your Shrubbery Can Be Saved

Rather than removing or replacing old, overgrown and disfigured shrubs, try reclaiming them as valuable plants. Many shrubs can be pruned back to health through **renovative** or **rejuvenative** pruning during the dormant season.

Renovation is the removal of approximately 1/3 of the oldest, largest stems during one pruning cycle. The objective is that after three years, properly pruned plants will be virtually all new growth again.

Rejuvenation is the removal of all stems to a height of two to four inches above ground. In spring, the entire plant will essentially be new.

Most shrubs with multiple stems arising from the ground (for example, spirea, privet, red twig dogwood, forsythia, arrowwood viburnum) can be pruned using either of these methods. Do not use these methods on plants that have one to three main stems (burkwood viburnum, burning bush, rhododendrons).

Renovation is less stressful on plants and should be considered as the routine method for maintaining plant size and health.

When plants are disfigured or severely overgrown with an abundance of dead wood, rejuvenation will be the most productive pruning method. Once plants are rejuvenated, annual pruning should be renovative. Continual rejuvenation will weaken plants.

Frequency of dormant pruning will depend on the plant species. Fast growing plants may need to be pruned annually while slower growing types may only need to be pruned every three to four years. No matter what the frequency, pruning should be a routinely scheduled function to keep plants healthy. It should not be done only as a reaction to decline in health and appearance. — *This article first appeared in Invite, Vol. 4, No. 12.*

