

Media Relations

Clipper Class: UNH Horticulture Students Practice Pruning Across Seacoast

April 4, 2011

John Hart, professor of horticulture technology at UNH's Thompson School of Applied Science, introduces students in his horticultural pruning class to the Japanese Zelkova trees along Durham's Main Street. Credit: Lisa Nugent, UNH Photographic Services

DURHAM, N.H. – Some public trees and shrubs around the Seacoast are getting much-needed haircuts this spring, thanks to horticulture students at the University of New Hampshire's Thompson School of Applied Science.

The 13 students in horticultural pruning, a course in the Thompson School's horticultural technology major, have shaped up the Japanese Zelkova along Durham's Main Street and the grape vines at Flag Hill Winery in Lee. On April 6, 2011, they'll take their pruners, loppers and pole saws to an overgrown orchard of heirloom apples in the historic gardens of Portsmouth's Strawberry Banke.

While the service the students provide to these clients and their trees and shrubs is valuable, the work forms the core of this hands-on course.

"The students are learning how plants grow and how to 'read' that in terms of pruning," says John Hart, professor of horticultural technology at the Thompson School. The course focuses on fruit pruning and on pruning deciduous and evergreen ornamental trees, shrubs, vines, and groundcovers.

In keeping with the hands-on philosophy of the Thompson School's associate degree programs, local farms, public gardens and nonprofits serve as classrooms and laboratories. To earn the two credits of horticultural pruning, students meet for three hours each Wednesday and prune. "We load up the tools and take off," says Hart. "We just go pruning."

At Flag Hill Winery, New Hampshire's largest vineyard, students worked the rows of Marechal Foch, a French hybrid grape, trimming the vines back to just two "arms" and leaving far more vegetation on the ground than on the vine. Winemaker and distiller Graham Hamblett, a 1998 graduate of the Thompson School, introduced the students to the 15 acres of vineyards and to the basics of pruning grapevines before turning them loose with clippers. "The vines are pretty resilient creatures," he says.

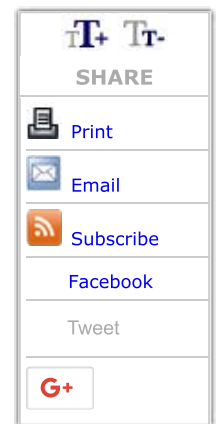
In downtown Durham, the class addressed some inherent structural weaknesses in Japanese Zelkova, a tree that Hart says is prone to multiple leaders and narrow branch angles. "The students did what they could to address future problems in these trees along Main Street," says Hart. "Street trees lead a tough life, assaulted by cars, salt, restricted root space, nutrient and water deficiencies, and the proximity of bars."

"The students learned how to work in a busy environment where motor vehicles and pedestrians abound," says Mike Lynch, director of public works for the Town of Durham. "For many years we have enjoyed great experiences when students from the Thompson School have completed horticultural community service projects here. They did a great job and we invite them back next year for more horticultural projects."

For the students -- many of whom work in landscape maintenance, parks management, and, increasingly, are pursuing small-scale farming -- pruning across the Seacoast has provided valuable skills. "It's very hands-on," says Chad Frazier '11 of Meredith, who works for Green Penguin Landscaping in Rye. "I feel like we learn a lot more this way."

In addition to Strawberry Banke, the course will practice pruning blueberries and raspberries at Berry Best Farm in Lebanon, Maine (April 13); ornamentals at the Urban Forestry Center in Portsmouth (May 4); peaches at DeMeritt Hill Farm in Lee (April 27); and ornamentals at Bedrock Gardens in Lee (April 20).

For more information about the Thompson School of Applied Science's horticultural technology program, go to <http://www.thompsonschoo.unh.edu/hort>. Visit UNH Cooperative Extension for resources on pruning:



http://extension.unh.edu/news/2011/02/pruning_demos.html.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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Photographs available to download:

http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/2011/apr/bp04thompson_01.jpg

Caption: John Hart, professor of horticulture technology at UNH's Thompson School of Applied Science, introduces students in his horticultural pruning class to the Japanese Zelkova trees along Durham's Main Street.

Credit: Lisa Nugent, UNH Photographic Services

http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/2011/apr/bp04thompson_02.jpg

Caption: Chad Frazier '11, of Meredith, practices his pruning techniques on a Japanese Zelkova tree on Durham's Main Street.

Credit: Lisa Nugent, UNH Photographic Services

http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/2011/apr/bp04thompson_03.jpg

Caption: Emma Erler '12, of New Hampton, prunes along Durham's Main Street.

Credit: Lisa Nugent, UNH Photographic Services

Reporters and editors: Horticultural Pruning meets every Wednesday from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. For more information, or to visit a class, contact John Hart at 603-862-1091 or john.hart@unh.edu.

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