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## **Show Love to People and Plants**

Roses are red, violets are blue, I love giving a living gift of love to you. There is something special about giving something that is alive and breathing. However, cut flowers like roses actually start dying the minute they are cut. Their life is short and fleeting. However, if you give a potted plant and it is taken care of properly then it will continue to live, grow and keep on giving.

We recently had a birthday party for my pastor. The church gave him plants to put around his new home. I told everyone that we needed to have a moment of prayer for the plants. Simply said, he is no horticulturist. Plants like relationships are very complicated, require work and seldom flourish when left unattended.

It is getting to that pruning time of year, when most plants shake at their roots. Plants cannot but I would run if I saw a chain saw slinging, lopper poking, power hedger-ing, amateur pruner coming at me; my worst Halloween nightmare. Actually "Crepe Murder" is rampant in the Pee Dee. This is the ghastly, so-called, pruning procedure of giving crepe myrtles a flat-top haircut. Since it sticks out like a sore thumb in your yard, it tells everyone that you know absolutely nothing about gardening. If you religiously read this article, I know I am preaching to the choir, but pruning should be done to benefit the plant not to release those inner frustrations. Pruning is supposed to improve the health and strength of plants.

Proper pruning is fairly simple. I used to say it is not brain surgery, but it is plant surgery. As you prune keep in mind these pruning for strength rules.

1. Thin out dying, dead, or pest-ridden twigs branches.
2. Remove one of the branches that are rubbing or crossing.
3. Remove branches that form a narrow, V-shaped angle with the trunk.
4. Remove upright-growing side limbs that grow taller than the main trunk.

Besides experiencing the immediate gratification of properly pruned plants think about the long term living benefits to you and your landscape.

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