

HOME & GARDEN

MISTAKES:

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should have between six to 12 inches between them to allow for air to move in between them. If they grow too close to each other, air cannot move through the foliage, and the plants may get mildew.

4. Pruning

Dochnahl said improper pruning is another mistake.

"Some people will prune too far," he said, such as when people decide a tree has grown too much so they "top" it by cutting off the uppermost branches and stem, leaving stubs at one height. That, Dochnahl said, is a mistake. If too much a tree is topped, it may die or weaken it to such an extent it cannot fight off an insect infestation. Also, to survive, trees will reproduce branches that grow quickly but are

weak, making them susceptible to breaking, especially in high winds.

"Proper pruning is important," Dochnahl said.

Gardeners should prune trees and shrubs, however, because, properly done, it can reinforce their structural integrity. Pruning dead or diseased plant parts can also reduce the spread of disease to healthy plants. Pruning trees, shrubs and even flowers eliminates overgrowth or propagation. Certain flowers will propagate themselves, and will then start to grow in clumps, such as black-eyed Susans. Roses, he said, will also bunch, which reduces the air flow among the plants. The same concept, he said, applies to edible gardens.

5. Plant health

Dochnahl said the last major mistake is gardeners do not regularly check to make sure their plants are

healthy — even those that are disease-resistant.

"Whether it's a tree, whether it's a plant or a lawn, you need to make sure they're healthy," he said. "It's like if you have children or domestic dogs and cats."

Some of the things people should watch for, he said, are brown spots or leaves that are curling. Dochnahl said fruit trees are also susceptible to certain types of insect infestation — apple trees, for example, are prone to apple maggots after fruit flies lay their larvae on the tree.

As soon as a problem is spotted, people should take action.

"There are things you can do if you catch it early enough," Dochnahl said.

"If people don't watch, then all of a sudden it's, 'My plant's dying,' and, by then, it's probably too late."

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vention. Follow the "four Ds" to protect yourself: Drain standing water; Stay indoors at dusk and dawn; Dress in long-sleeves and pants; and use DEET-based mosquito repellent.

• Poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac

can lurk in backyards. Almost 85 percent of people develop a rash when they come into contact with these weeds. Control poisonous weeds long-term by carefully digging out the plants while wearing waterproof gloves or treating with a pesticide.

Defend your local ecosystem by identifying exotic plants in your garden

or yard. Spot invasive weeds and insects in your area? Let your county extension office know, which may have a monitoring and management program in place.

For more lawn and garden tips, visit www.DebugTheMyths.com.

— Jade McDowell, EO Media Group, contributed to this story

ALBUS:

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drove a screw through two pieces with a hammer. The slat didn't split and the screw just bored a hole.

Perhaps a third reason of its popularity is the price.

Grade one Albus wood, which doesn't have any knots or rot and the grain is attractive, sells for \$2.75 per board, while grade one

Western red cedar sells for \$3.50, with the price rising to \$3.75 soon. Albus is \$1 less because of its manufacturing proximity: just a handful of miles. According to McKamey, customers have enjoyed the quality, price and local availability of the new building material, especially since good, old growth grade one cedar becomes tough to acquire beginning in early spring.

"With cedar being as

hard as it is to get, it gives us another alternative other than the incense cedar (and other woods)," McKamey said. "I've sold that stuff in the past, and I just don't feel comfortable selling stuff that I don't feel is gonna last for people, and I really think this one here, I think they got something. It's a sustainable product that we can actually help preserve forest for future generations."

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