



## TEN FAQs OF PRUNING FRUIT TREES

by UC Master Gardeners of Napa County

1. WHAT IS PRUNING?
  - cutting twigs and branches, dead or living.
  - Something happens when we prune—gardeners need to know what that is!
2. WHY DO WE PRUNE? THESE ARE OUR GOALS.
  - establishes a sound structure
  - promotes good air circulation
  - balances shady leaves and sunny branches
  - assists fruit production
3. WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME TO PRUNE?
  - when the tree is dormant
  - YES: January and February
  - MAYBE: November, December, March
4. WHAT ABOUT SUMMER PRUNING?
  - summer pruning manages tree size
  - dormant pruning manages fruit, and tree structure
5. WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TREE ANATOMY?
  - scaffold branches, lateral branches, nodes, spurs, watersprouts
6. WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PRUNING VOCABULARY?
  - leader, open center, topping, heading cut, thinning cut, dormant pruning, summer pruning
7. DO I NEED SPECIAL TOOLS?
  - YES! Hand pruner, lopper, pruning saw. Remember, clean sharpen, sanitize, lubricate
8. ARE THERE SOME PRUNING GUIDELINES?
  - allow plenty of time
  - assemble all tools
  - step back and look often
  - start at the back or bottom and get the feel
9. AND THERE ARE SOME RULES, TOO.
  - work from inside to outside
  - never leave a stub
  - when heading back, cut to out facing bud or branch
  - when thinning, cut just outside the branch collar
  - UC recommends NO paint or seal on the cut, no matter what size
10. IT'S ALL ABOUT SUNLIGHT!
  - sunlight makes fruit grow: on the leaves, it provides food for the tree, on the branches it provides food for the fruit
  - do most of the pruning in the top of the tree so the lower branches are exposed to sunlight; shaded branches eventually stop fruiting