

Deciduous Fruit Tree Care in Winter 2022

Joan Cloutier, UCCE Master Gardener



General Cultural Practices in Fall or Early Winter

Clean up, weed control, apply mulch or/and compost

- Rake and remove debris from under fruit trees that has shown disease or insect pests.
- Clean up any fruit that has dropped, it may harbor pests.
- Pick mummies off stone fruit trees and dispose, they contain spores.
- Control weeds: Always keep crown area weed free to prevent disease and pest problems.
- Apply organic mulch and/or compost under trees, will increase beneficial microbes, worms, and will add nutrients. Keep mulch several inches from tree trunks.

Planting New Trees

Site Selection and Planting New Deciduous Fruit Trees in Winter

- Need at least 7 hours of sunlight in summer for deciduous trees, can be shaded in winter.
- Study potential locations, will other trees or buildings block light or air circulation? Are there other large established trees with large roots nearby?
- Soil should drain well, not compacted.
- Dig hole when soil still friable.
- Dig hole WIDE, at least twice as wide and about as deep as the rootball, if bareroot, much wider than rootball.
- Set tree slightly higher than soil and backfill hole with your soil, no amendments or fertilizer needed.
- Build watering basin around tree with an inner ridge to prevent water from pooling around the trunk. Water in well to settle the soil.
- Mulch around the new tree, but leave 6" next to trunk bare, never cover tree trunk with mulch.
- Size control and development of low fruiting wood begins now. See: Pruning New Trees
- To prevent sunburn, paint tree trunk with white interior latex paint, mix 1 part paint with 1 part water, 1:1 dilution.

High Density Plantings, Hedgerows, etc. but can be challenging to manage

- 2, 3 or 4 in a hole is difficult to manage, planting at least 24-36" apart in the hole may be more successful
- Cut all trees back to same height, cut back new growth by half in spring, again in late summer
- Hedgerows: Plant trees at least 3' or more apart for easier maintenance, same practices as previous unless they will be espaliered.
- Choose plants for high density groupings that have similar irrigation and maintenance requirements.
- Trees that differ in harvest time will extend your season.
- Grafting or "cocktail trees" can also accomplish this.

Selecting Fruit Trees at the Nursery

- Scion: upper part of grafted tree, a branch, shoot or bud from a desirable variety determines what the fruit will be like.
- Rootstock: a variety chosen for its vigor or dwarfing ability, resistance to disease or pests, tolerance of specific soil types, cold hardiness, etc.
- Choose semi-dwarfing or dwarfing rootstocks to help control tree size.
- Bareroot deciduous trees available late Dec.-March but many garden centers pot them up immediately
- Bareroot trees must be planted soon after purchase *or* put them into container until ready.
- Chill hours: *usually* listed on the nursery tag (hours between 32-45°F)
- Is the tree self fruitful or will it need a pollinator? *Usually* listed on nursery tag.
- Harvest times? Too much fruit at once?
- Disease resistance

Winter Pest Control for Common Problems of Existing Fruit Trees

Peach Leaf Curl

- Affects leaves, twigs, and shoots on peaches and nectarines, sometimes but rare on cherries. and does not affect apricots or plums. Can stunt growth if severe.
- Sanitation, remove diseased twigs, branches, leaves under tree.
- Spray fungicide Nov. after leaf drop, again before bud break.
- Copper sprays may be more effective if mixed with compatible dormant oil.
- Chlorothalonil is the other fungicide active ingredient effective against peach leaf curl.
- Consider resistant varieties such as Indian Free, Frost, Muir, Q-1-8 White Peach.

Brown Rot

- Affects apricots, cherries, peaches, nectarines and sometimes prunes, rarely plums.
- Sanitation: remove all mummies from ground & branches, remove affected twigs, clean up under tree.
- Fungicides: Copper or myclobutanil active ingredients Myclobutanil can be sprayed when buds start showing color. Spray again at full bloom, but no copper products should be used at full bloom or after bloom. You can spray again at petal fall but no copper.
- Read fungicide labels **very carefully**, measure as close as possible, rate is important.
- Try resistant varieties for new plantings such as Harcot or Harglow apricots.

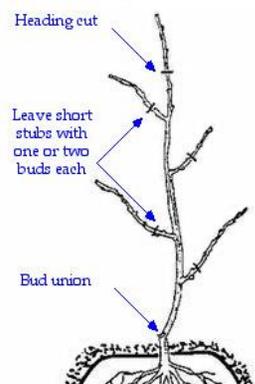
Fireblight

- Affects most pears, Asian pears, quince, and many apples.
- Sanitation: Remove debris under trees.
- Remove any affected twigs or branches 10-12" below infection.
- Copper sprays may be somewhat effective but will only prevent new infections, spray during and throughout bloom period at 4-5 day intervals if humidity is high.
- Pears resistant to fireblight: Harrow Delight, Warren, Blakes Pride Keiffer, Potomac, Hood, Moonglow
- Apples resistant to fireblight: Hudson's Golden Gem (Pink Lady is VERY susceptible!)

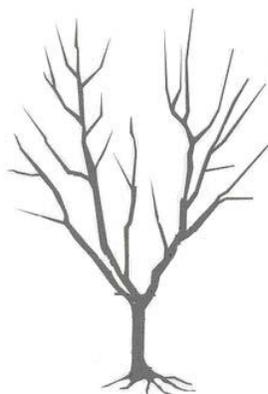
Pruning New Fruit Trees

- If you want to keep tree low and manageable, cut off tree to 24" above soil surface (knee height)
- Later, in Apr. or early May, cut back new growth by half, cut back again in late summer.
- More information and pictures on pruning young fruit trees:
- [UC IPM Home](#) > [Homes, Garden, Turf](#) > [Fruits and Nuts](#)

First Year Pruning



Training Young Fruit Trees



Develop a strong “scaffold” system. Choose 2-4 well spaced branches to become strong, permanent scaffolds. This is “vase shaped open center” Light will enter canopy

Pruning Established Fruit Trees

- Apples and Pears bear fruit on spurs, 3-5 yrs. old is most productive, prune off older spurs.
- Peaches and nectarines bear fruit on 1 yr. old wood, trim about ½ the growth each yr., head back long branches, thin out branches and shoots.
- Plums bear fruit on short spurs on wood 2-3 yrs. old. New whip shoots should be pruned back by half to stimulate side branching where new spurs develop.
- Prune figs to ensure strong branching to support heavy crops, similar to other deciduous fruit.

Other tips on pruning

- Prune out branches that are dead, diseased, broken, or crossing over.
- Prune out suckers as they occur on bottom of tree trunk.
- Prune apricots in summer, they need 6 weeks of non-rainy weather after pruning to prevent Eutypa infections.
- Prune back long branches after fruit harvest in summer, prune for detail in winter. (exception is apricot)
- Espalier is also a pruning method that can be done on many trees, best on apples or pears.

Resources and references

California Master Gardener Handbook, University of California ANR Publication 3382
The Home Orchard: Growing Your Own Deciduous Fruit and Nut Trees, C.Ingels, P.Geisel, M. Norton, UC ANR catalog #3485

Websites, Links and You Tubes:

- <https://mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/> Master Gardener Santa Clara County website
- www.ipm.ucdavis.edu UC Davis Integrated Pest Management website
- https://fruitsandnuts.ucanr.edu/Weather_Services/Chill_Calculators/ winter chill calculators
- <https://www.davewilson.com/home-gardens> Dave Wilson Nursery website information on fruit tree varieties, pruning, harvest times, taste tests and more for home gardeners
- <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/GARDEN/fruit.html> pruning diagrams, training, planting, fertilization, watering, pests and diseases of specific fruit trees
- http://homeorchard.ucanr.edu/The_Big_Picture/Pruning_&_Training/ Pruning information
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=um2LbW-tuCE> YouTube: Winter Pruning Santa Clara Valley Master Gardeners
- <https://www.davewilson.com/community-and-resources/videos/winter-pruning-january-2018> YouTube on winter pruning, includes pruning older fruit trees
- [Fruit Trees: Training and Pruning Deciduous Trees](#), UC ANR Publication 8057
- [Fruit Trees: Pruning Overgrown Deciduous Trees](#), UC ANR Publication 8058

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