

Growing Orchard Communities

COMMUNITY ORCHARD TOOLKIT



Pruning – Charles Staniland

This information sheet will give you an overview on pruning but there are lots of books and advice which go into more details. Orchard Link regularly run pruning courses and there is nothing better than learning by doing!

The Reasons for Pruning:

- Build and maintain the tree shape/frame - encourage growth
- Encourage regular cropping by regulating fruit buds
- Allow easy access to trees - prevent overcrowding of branches
- Restrict tree height / spread
- Reduce 'windage' - thin out to offer less of barrier to strong winds
- Improve fruit quality

What to Prune:

- Damaged, diseased, and dead wood
- Crossing branches
- Vigorous vertical wood
- Thin fruiting spurs
- A proportion of cropping wood

How to Prune/Cut:

- Close to a bud
- Close to stem but 'outside' of branch 'collar'
- For larger branches make a first cut to remove the weight of the branch and then final cut to 'tidy up'

When to Prune:

- Winter Pruning (dormant season) is easiest time to prune but encourages growth.
- Summer pruning is most effective for removing vigorous wood & restricting trees

Formative pruning:

- Select 'wide-angled' branches to form spread out tiers
- Remove vertical competitors for the leader (main shoot)
- If weak growing 'tip' leading shoots to encourage branching.

How to start? *(after removing dead, diseased, damaged etc)*

1. First view each tree from all around and try to visualise it in full leaf.
2. Learn to recognise different aged wood and aim for a balance range of young & older wood distributed evenly throughout the tree
3. Thin out heavily spurred branches, which tend to crop biennially, to encourage new shoots

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4. Thin out the 'top' if the bottom part of the tree is becoming unproductive through shading. Good light must reach the bottom branches
5. Remove branches with old unproductive buds, dead spurs or no buds, but try not to remove too many from the bottom of the tree
6. Thin out vigorous, vegetative upright branches/shoots with poor angles and few fruit buds
7. If many of the best buds and spurs are on the outside and top of the canopy, then thin out the oldest and biggest branches
8. Always if possible remove whole branches rather than parts of branches– avoid leaving stumps.

