

EDIBLE
GARDENING
SERIES

Pruning Fruit Trees

Properly trained and pruned trees will yield high quality fruit much earlier in their lives and live significantly longer. You cannot kill a fruit tree by pruning incorrectly and you can correct any pruning mistakes as the tree grows.

Dormant pruning is an invigorating process. Pruning should begin as late in winter as possible to avoid winter injury. A good rule to follow is to prune the latest blooming tree first and the earliest blooming last. Another factor to consider prune the oldest trees first and the younger trees last. You can prune throughout the summer. Look at air circulation (disease control) and the size of your fruit tree.

FRUIT TREES NEED PRUNING TO:

1. Establish the basic structure
2. Open up the tree canopy to maximize light penetration essential for flower bud development and fruit set. On most fruit trees flower buds for the current season's crop are formed the previous summer. Light penetration is essential for flower bud development, optimal fruit set, flavor and quality. Opening the tree canopy also permits adequate air movement through the tree, this promotes rapid drying to minimize disease infection and allows through pesticide applications
3. Produce high quality fruit
4. Develop a strong tree frame work that will support fruit production
5. Remove dead, diseased or broken limbs

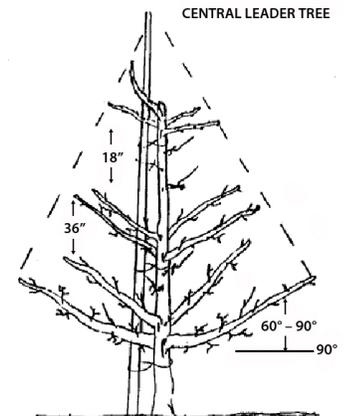
A well pruned tree is easier to maintain and to harvest. Late winter is the best time for pruning on most trees with an exception of cherries, which need early summer pruning to avoid bacterial diseases. Late summer (mid-August) thin to expose fruit.

CENTRAL LEADER

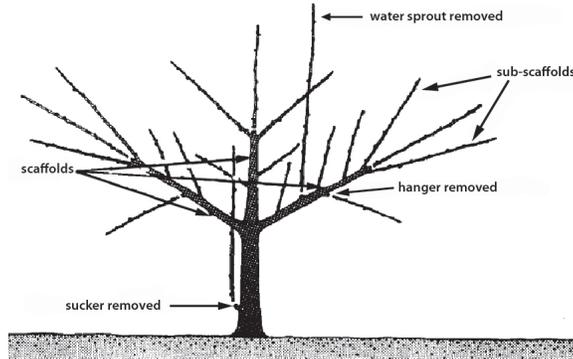
Most commonly used to apples, pears, Asian pears.

Trees are shaped somewhat like a Christmas tree. Central leader tree is characterized by one main trunk, referred to as the leader, and 3 to 4 branches collectively called a scaffolding whorl. The selected scaffolds should be uniformly spaced around the trunk, not directly across from or above one another.

Identify the central leader and prune off other limbs that compete with it. Keep more horizontal branches and less vertical branches. Prune the upper branches to stay shorter than the lower branches. Remove suckers around base of tree and any spindly shoots and water sprouts from along the limbs.



OPEN CENTER / VASE SHAPED TREE



OPEN CENTER SYSTEM / VASE SHAPED SYSTEM

Most commonly used on almond, apricot, cherry, fig, nectarine, peach, plums, prunes and combination apples & pears.

The open center system allows more sunlight to reach inside the tree.

Please turn the page for more information. ➡

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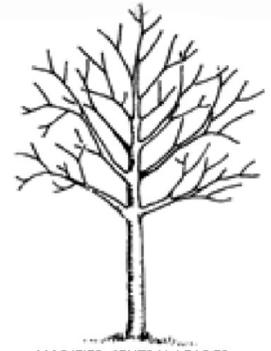
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MODIFIED LEADER SYSTEM

Mostly used for nut bearing trees, but is also used on apples & pears.

Based upon giving the central leader and three or four laterals equal importance. This type of pruning trains the tree to one tall trunk with several major limbs branching at different levels.



MODIFIED CENTRAL LEADER
A tall trunk supports
several scaffold branches.

APPLES

Central Leader (Best) or Open Center

Fruit is produced on short spurs that last 5-10 years sometimes as long as 20 years. Prune lightly to remove a tenth of the older wood each year.

- Thinning fruit: 8 inches apart

APRICOT

Vase Shaped / Open Center

Fruit is produced on the previous year's stems and on spurs that last 3 to 4 years. Prune out a quarter of the older growth and cut half of the previous year's stems.

- Thinning fruit: 2 to 3 inches apart

CHERRY

Central Leader System

Fruit is produced in clusters of small spurs that last 10 to 12 years. Sweet cherries need to be topped to keep the tree at a manageable size. Remove only weak and crossing branches in yearly pruning

PEACH & NECTARINE

Vase Shaped / Open Center

Fruit is produced on previous year's long stems and on short lived spurs. Prune back each of last year's stems to half its length. Annual pruning is more critical on peach and nectarine than on most fruits.

- Thinning fruit: 4 to 6 inches apart

PEAR

Modified Central Leader or Central Leader

These have 5 or 6 scaffolding branches. Fruit is produced on small, long lived spurs. Prune lightly when of fruiting age.

PLUMS

Open Center / Vase Shaped

2 groups of plums: Japanese & European. Japanese spurs are 3 inches long, and European can develop spurs up to 3 feet long. Both bear fruit for 6 to 8 years. Remove a third of the new wood each year by thinning & shortening. When a branch has produced fruit for 6 to 8 years select a new lateral branch and remove the old.

- Thinning fruit: 3 to 4 inches apart

PERSIMMONS

Central Leader

Fuyu requires about 15 leaves per fruit to give adequate size.

- Thinning fruit: Remove the fruit closest to the base of the shoot. Only one fruit should be left on most laterals.