

## Pruning Deciduous Fruit Trees

Almonds, Apples, Apricots, Nectarines, Peaches, Pears, and Plums

Each tree is an individual and tends to have its own shape depending upon its variety, age and previous care and pruning. There are few “absolutes” but more general rules, somewhat depending upon what you have.

After the leaves have fallen, stand back and look at the whole tree. Look for dead wood, broken branches and poorly shaped branches. Remove all of these first. Next look for crossed and rubbing branches then remove them.

Now, you are ready to open up and shape what is left. Remove all ‘water sprouts’ (growth that shoots straight up) and other branches that are too closely spaced.

The center of the tree should be thinned to allow for light to filter in. If the tree is too tall, in your opinion, reduce the top, but not too severely. If the tree is very tall, you may have to reduce the size over several seasons. Generally thin out the whole tree. Cut back new growth from last year about 25% to 30% in length. Do not remove all of last year’s growth or you will get little or no fruit the next season. Be sure that remaining growth is thinned as evenly as possible so the tree is not too dense.

Many professionals use a “vase” or open center method which encourages more production on lower branches.

Note: On apricots, apples, pears and plums you will see small squat twiglets called ‘spurs’ on older branches. Do not remove them as they will produce flowers and fruit.

When removing larger limbs, be sure to make three cuts to keep the branch from ripping off and damaging the trunk of the tree. For more information about pruning, pick up the book, “How To Prune Fruit Trees” by Sanford Martin at our nurseries.