



THE ORCHARD
 **PROJECT**

**Community
Orchard
Leader's
Handbook**

Everything you
need to know about
planting and
caring for your
community orchard

PRUNING EDITION

Introduction to Pruning

Why prune?

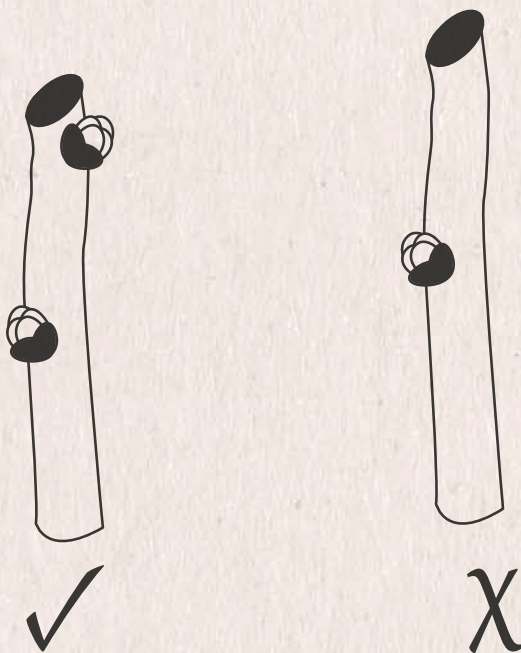
In the first few years, we prune to encourage growth, a good framework, and the development of a fruit-bearing spur system.

Later, once the tree is established, pruning will help productivity and to keep the tree healthy.

The tools for the job



How to do the perfect pruning cut



LONG-HANDLED PRUNER (LOPPER)

TWO BLADED BYPASS SECATEURS (NOT ONVIL SECATEURS)

PRUNING SAW (PREFERABLY FOLDING FOR SAFETY)

Remember to always cut to an outward facing bud, leaving approximately 1/2 cm between the top of the cut and the bud. The cut must be sloping and clean so use some good secateurs.

Formative Pruning

Formative pruning for bushes and standards

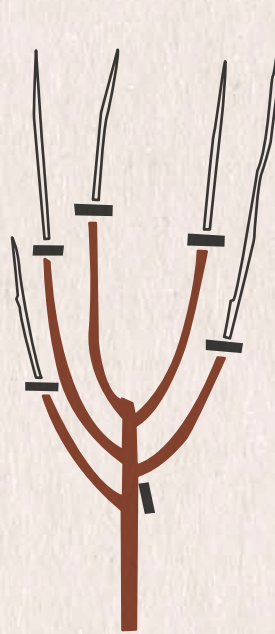
The purpose of pruning in the first few years of a tree's life is to create a good shape and framework for a good crop. We're after an evenly spaced, open-centred, balanced network of branches.

Apples and pears should be pruned the winter after they are planted to encourage their growth. Pruning takes place from November to March, when the air is above freezing.

Pruning of stone fruit trees (eg plums and cherries) should be slightly less vigorous and take place in the summer. When you prune a branch it will grow back at an angle, in the direction that the top most bud left behind is pointing. As fruit buds usually grow in whorls up the stem, the bud that you prune back to will influence the direction of the new growth.

Pruning and guards

Pruning can be complicated by guards. They restrict the tree making open crowns more difficult to achieve at low levels. It is a question of compromise between shape and security.



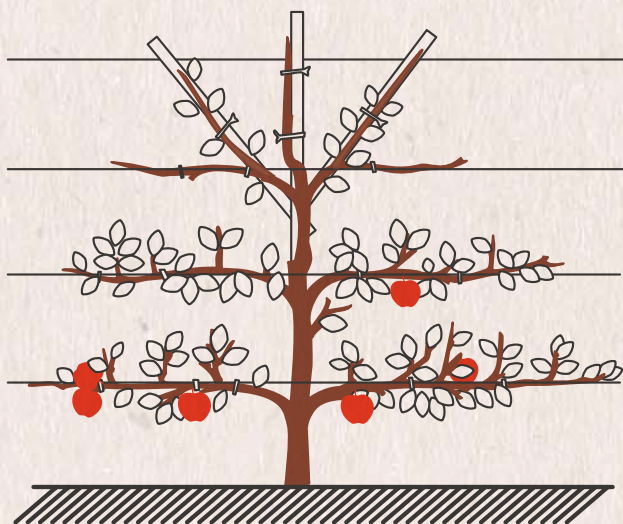
- Cut the top off the main leader (the trunk) when it gets to about 3-4 feet high.
- Cut back strong branches by about 1/3 of their length.
- Cut back weaker branches by 1/2-2/3 of their length. This is because the harder you cut back a branch, the stronger it will grow next year.



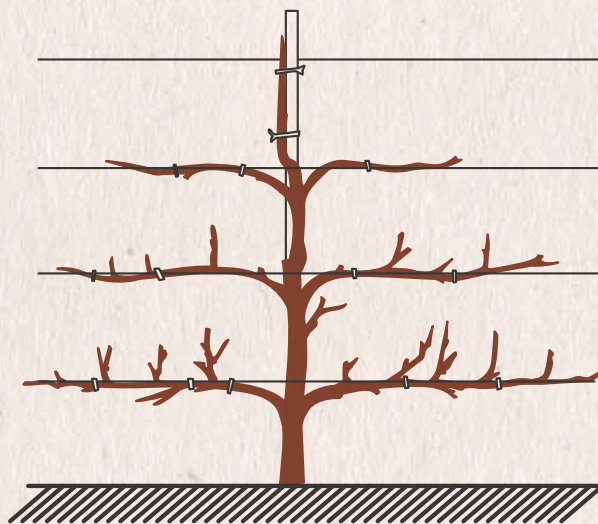
- Keep 3-5 primary branches, that have formed wide angles to the stem and that point in different directions. When you look down from above, they should radiate out from the trunk like the spokes on a wheel.

Formative pruning for a trained form

If you are planning on training your tree, you should only prune in the summer to inhibit shoot growth.



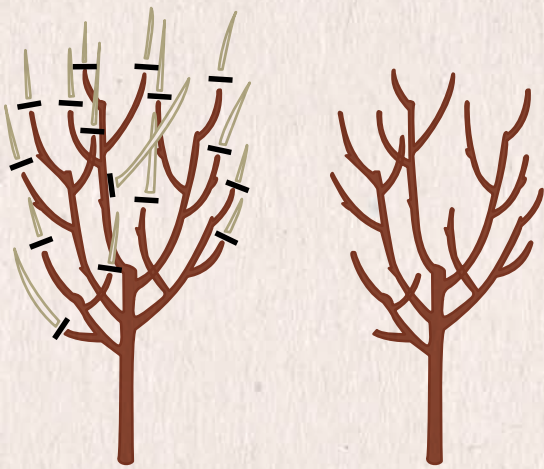
In summer, train the growth from the terminal bud and 2 side buds along canes. Prune in summer from mid-July onwards. Cut each shoot growing from the main branches back to the third leaf from the base.



In winter, remove the canes and lower the branches, and tie them along horizontal wires.

Later Pruning

The aim of later pruning is to keep encouraging the development of a good framework. Prune apples and pears in winter, and plums in the summer.



Pruning in the 2nd year

- Cut back new growth to 4 buds if you don't want to keep it for the shape of the tree. This will encourage spur systems to start to form, which will bear the fruit.
- Cut back new growth that closes the heart of the tree – we're trying to keep the centre open. Usually you'll prune back to an outward-facing bud.
- Cut back new growth to half its length if you want to keep it for the shape of the tree. (*i.e. outward facing growth*)

Pruning in the 3rd and subsequent years

Your tree should now have a good shape. The aim of ongoing pruning is to have an open, bowl-shaped tree, to allow plenty of light and air through the center of the tree. This will help to prevent disease and maximise productivity

- Always prune apple and pears in winter and plums in summer.
- Remove dead, diseased or weak branches.
- Cut back crossing branches, or branches growing into the centre of the tree.

Then, for spur-bearers only:

- In the centre of the tree – leave leaders alone, cut back laterals growing into the tree and beyond the branch leader to about 4 inches.
- In the outer part of the tree – leave leaders and laterals alone.

For tip-bearers:

- Cut back some leaders but make sure to leave some laterals with fruit buds at their tips, or no apples for you!