



Spring and Summer Fruit Tree Maintenance

Watering

- Try not to over water or underwater. Think about if it rained and how much.
- Feel a couple inches below mulch to see if dry. If moist, you don't need to water.
- A good rule of thumb is that the trees need about 1" of water a week (1/2" for berries). This equates to about 5 gal of water. However, the amount of water and frequency of watering depends on the soil type and weather so be observant.

Root Area

- Cover any exposed roots.
- Make sure the graft is above soil line.
- Mulching helps keep the soil moist and weeds away. Also it keeps damaging mowers and weed eaters away from the trunk.
- Add a 2-3" layer of mulch with a 24-36" diameter around the tree.
- Pull Mulch away from trunk to keep the graft and bark dry.
- WEED in the mulched diameter around tree.
- Prune or pinch off suckers (shoots) growing from the rootstock.

Staking

- Only stake trees that need it.
- Use tie material that won't cut into the bark.
- Stake perpendicular to the winds (so put stakes on the east and west if the wind blows north and south).
- Stake low in the first year during root development.
- Drive in stake deep and away from root ball.
- Check on stakes during season and adjust if needed.
- Remove temporary staking at the end of the first growing season, 2-3 years for semi-dwarfing varieties.
- Permanently stake dwarfing varieties use a tall strong wooden or metal post placed vertically 4-6 inches from trunk and 2 ft deep upwind of the prevailing wind side. Or use a trellising system with stakes and wire.

Pruning (Late July/Early August)

- Pruning helps allow light and breeze to reach the fruit.
- Remove any competing central leaders [apples, pears]
- Remove any dead, broken, or weak stubby branches.
- Select scaffolding branches and prune back any competing, rubbing, or crossed branches all the way to the trunk.
- Second set of scaffolding [primary] branches should be selected about 2-3' above first set [less distance on dwarfing varieties]. Prune any lateral branches between scaffolds all the way back to the trunk.
- Remove any secondary branches [off of the primary branches] that are pointing straight down or up
- If needed, use spreaders to help create 45-60° angles off main branches.



Fruit

- In general, for the first two years, remove all fruit. Can allow one or two 'tasting' fruit.
- In later years, thin to only one fruit per cluster [apples and pears]/ 2-4" between fruit [plums and nectarines]/ 3-5" [peaches]. For heavier crops, fruit should be spaced 6-8".
- Cherries are not normally thinned.
- Bagging fruit can be done as an insect control. Bag early when fruit are about marble size.
- Use Ziploc bags for apples and pears and cotton or nylon [breathable] bags for soft fruits [peaches, plums].

Scouting

- Look for signs of insects, disease, and other damages.
- Look closely under leaves, terminal succulent growth [new growth], bark, and fruit.
- Think about and make notes on the weather, time of year, and any possible damaging events [mowing, animals, kids, etc].
- Remember that damages can be caused by over/under watering, sun scorch, hail, humans, animals, etc.
- Consider if it is isolated on one tree or affecting multiple trees and species.
- Look for signs of insects including holes in leaves, sticky substances, black caterpillar poop, curling of leaves, webbing, necrotic spots [dead spots], etc.
- Look for signs of disease including deformed leaves, excessive branching, wilting, brown [necrotic] or yellowing [chlorosis] of leaves, necrotic spots, oozing sap, cankers on bark [black sunken spots]
- In general be aware of any changes! Scout often! Take pictures! If taking a sample, keep it moist and cool (keep from wilting or drying out). Put in plastic bag and put in fridge.