

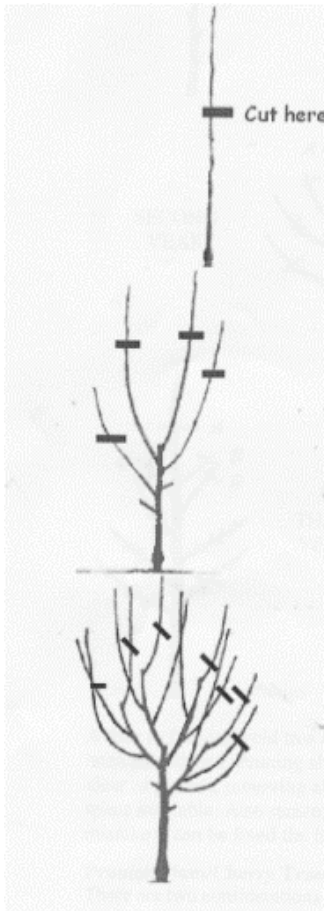


PRUNING FRUIT TREES

Pruning of fruit trees depends on the form wanted – pyramid or bush (vase).

Bush (Vase) Shaped Trees

The first pruning should occur immediately after planting. Make sure you know if you have a one or two-year-old tree. The examples below show pruning starting at a one-year-old tree.



PRUNE A ONE-YEAR-OLD TREE

A one-year-old tree should be pruned immediately after planting – cut off the top half of the trunk with a sharp pair of secateurs.

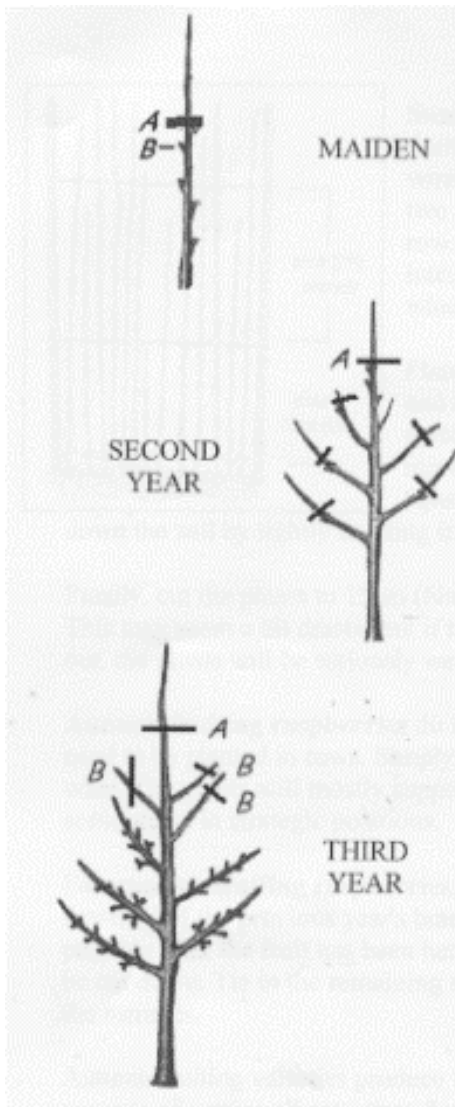
Before cutting, make sure that the bottom half contains at least four buds or formed branches. If not, make the cut higher, above the fourth bud.

PRUNE A TWO-YEAR-OLD TREE

Below the thick black lines is the tree's growth in the previous year – this should not be pruned. Above the thick black lines should all be pruned by a third. When pruning, cut just above an outward-facing bud – this bud will then produce a side-shoot in the spring. Which will grow away from the centre of the tree.

PRUNE A THREE-YEAR-OLD TREE

Pruning is similar to the two-year-old tree – below the thick black lines is the tree's growth in the previous year. This should not be pruned. Above the thick black lines should all be pruned by a third. When pruning, cut just above an outward-facing bud.



Pruning Pyramidal Trees

The stem should be cut back to approximately 60cm (2ft) above soil level. Make the cut (point A) just above a bud. Remove (rub out) the bud (at point B) below the top bud, making sure that there are at least three or four buds remaining below.

In the second year's pruning, cut back the main stem by about 45cm (18in) just above a bud (point A). Below this cut, there should be three or four buds above the branches from last year.

Prune all the remaining branches so that they are about 25cm (10in) long. The cut should be immediately above a healthy looking bud.

In the third year's pruning, again cut back the main stem by about 45cm (18in), just above a bud (point A). Below this cut, there should be three or four buds, above the branches from last year.

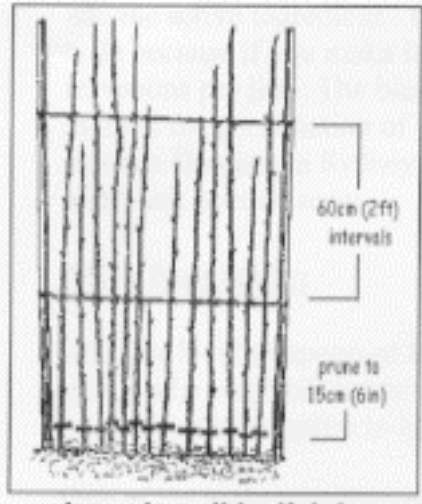
Prune the branches, which have grown this year so that they are about 25cm (10in) long (points B). The cut should be immediately above a healthy looking bud.

A four to five-year-old tree can be considered mature and the basic shape will have been established. Pruning should consist of keeping the centre of the tree relatively clear of growth, removing all weak or diseased growth and keeping the tree within the space available. Also remember that fruit trees are very forgiving if you make a mistake – it can be fixed the following year.

Pruning Plum & Cherry Trees

There are two considerations when pruning plum/cherry trees. The first is to establish a good shape. The second is to avoid any infection with silver leaf disease. To avoid silver leaf disease, prune plum/cherry trees when they are growing strongly - not in the winter. Try to make the pruning cuts as cleanly as possible, and avoid crushing the wood. If any larger sections of branch are to be pruned, seal the cut with a protective sealer.

Raspberries



Summer fruiting raspberries will require support during the growing season. Put the support poles and wires in place after digging, but before planting. Secure two 2.2m (7ft) poles in the ground at either end of the row. Tie two or three horizontal wires at 60cm (2ft) intervals to the poles. Tie the plants loosely to the wires when they begin to grow.

Place the plants in the trench about 45cm (18in) apart, and cover the roots with soil 5cm (2in) above the existing soil mark on the stem. This will encourage more vigorous rooting. Work a handful of *bonemeal* per square metre (3ft) into the surface of the soil. Firm down the soil by lightly treading it

down and water if the soils are not moist.

Finally, cut the plants to 15cm (6in) from the ground as shown in the diagram above. This may seem a bit drastic, but if the correct pruning for the first year is not carried out, the plants will be seriously weakened.

Autumn fruiting raspberries do not require strong supports, and therefore do not need to be planted in rows. Simply devote an area to them and let them grow as they want. The plants will mostly support themselves with only the odd bit of help from some sticks in strategic positions.

For summer fruiting raspberries, prune from the second year onwards by cutting down all of the previous year's branches to 8cm (3in) from the ground as soon as possible after the fruit has been harvested. Any weak-looking new shoots should also be cut down. Tie in the remaining shoots to the support wires as they grow throughout the summer.

Autumn fruiting varieties produce fruit on branches grown this year. Pruning of these consists of cutting all growth to 8cm (3in) from the ground. Autumn fruiting raspberries are very versatile because as well as pruning in the traditional manner, you can also have an earlier crop in early summer if you prune only the top 10cm (6in) from some of the canes. These canes will give a much earlier crop but at the same time allow the traditionally pruned canes to push through and crop in autumn.

The plants need a ready supply of water to produce good fruits. Depending on the soil type, watering throughout the summer on a weekly basis may well be needed. All raspberries will appreciate a layer of well-rotted compost being applied to the soil each year. Because raspberry roots are very near the surface, do not dig the compost into the soil, this will only damage the roots. In the absence of compost, scatter a handful of bonemeal to each square metre (3ft).

Some Organic Options for Fruit Trees

Bicarbonate of soda organic fungicide:

Use two litres of water, and a drop of vegetable oil, which helps to fix the spray to the leaf when it's dried. A drop of detergent helps to spread the mix over the leaf. Then add the active ingredient – bicarbonate of soda. Don't get carried away with the soda because if you make it too strong, it'll cause all sorts of problems. Put in two teaspoons per litre. The bicarbonate of soda makes the leaf surface alkaline and this inhibits the germination of fungal spores. You can also use it on tomatoes. The Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney has found this to be effective on powdery mildew, rust and black spot on roses.

Milk fungicide:

Mix one level teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda into one litre of water. Add one litre of skim milk and a pinch of Condy's Crystals, which you can get from a produce agent (someone that supplies to horse owners). Shake thoroughly.

One of the main problems people come across with fruit trees is Brown Rot:

This disease affects mainly apple, pear and plum trees. Brown rot (*Monilinia fructigena* and *laxa*) is a fungus infection that enters the fruit through wounds made by wasps, caterpillars and birds. The symptoms are rotting and browning of the entire fruit. The fruit becomes soft and grey spots of fungus grown on the browned fruit. Eventually the fruit will shrivel and fall off.

How to treat Brown Rot:

The disease is spread by contact, so all infected fruit, whether on the tree or on the ground, should be removed and burnt as soon as possible. Keep the soils and grass around the tree clean. Remove leaves and other debris regularly.