



Pruning Fruit Trees



Pruning fruit trees is essential for promoting healthy growth, maintaining shape, and maximizing fruit production. The exact timing and techniques may vary slightly depending on the specific fruit tree species (e.g., apple, pear, cherry, plum) and local climate conditions.

Here's a general guide for fruit tree pruning in Ontario:

Timing

Dormant Season: Pruning is typically done during the dormant season, which is late fall to early spring before new growth begins. This is usually from late November to early April in Ontario.

Avoid Extreme Cold: Avoid pruning during extremely cold periods, as this can increase the risk of cold injury to the tree.

Tools and Safety: Use sharp and clean pruning tools, such as hand pruners, loppers, and pruning saws. Wear appropriate safety gear, including gloves and safety glasses.

Objectives of Pruning:

- Remove dead, diseased, or damaged wood.
- Improve sunlight penetration and air circulation within the canopy.
- Shape the tree for better structure and aesthetics.
- Encourage the development of fruiting wood.

Basic Pruning Techniques

Thinning: Remove crowded, weak, crossed or excess branches to allow sunlight and air to reach all parts of the tree.

Heading Back: Shorten the length of branches to encourage lateral growth and stimulate new shoots.

Directional Pruning: Encourage growth in a particular direction by cutting back to an outward-facing bud.

Specific Fruit Tree Considerations

Apple and Pear Trees: Focus on creating an open center or modified central leader shape. Remove upright shoots and water sprouts.

Peach and Plum Trees: These trees benefit from a vase-shaped structure. Remove inward-growing branches and maintain an open canopy.

Cherry Trees: Prune to improve air circulation, reduce disease pressure, and shape the tree for optimal fruit production.

Disease Prevention

Sterilize pruning tools between cuts, especially if working on different trees, to prevent the spread of diseases. Remove and destroy any pruned material that may harbor diseases. Consider applying Dormant Oil Spray to prevent diseases during the growing season (always read the product label)

Ongoing Maintenance

Regularly inspect your fruit trees during the growing season for any signs of disease, pest infestation, or additional pruning needs.

It's important to note that while these guidelines offer a general approach to fruit tree pruning in Ontario, specific recommendations may vary based on factors such as the age of the tree, local climate conditions, and the cultivar. Ask our experts for recommendations about your specific trees and their needs.