

Fig. 13: One year old apple tree with lateral branches and central leader (CL).

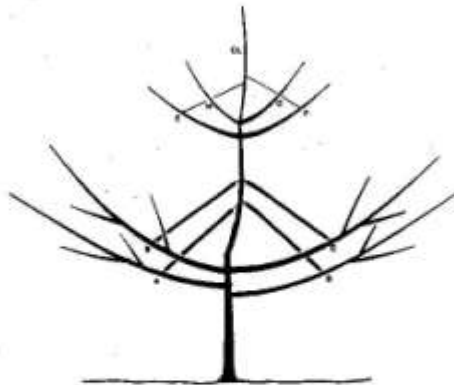


Fig. 14: Two year apple tree with wooden spreaders (A) and metal spreaders (B).



Fig. 15: A one year old peach, cherry, apricot, or plum tree.

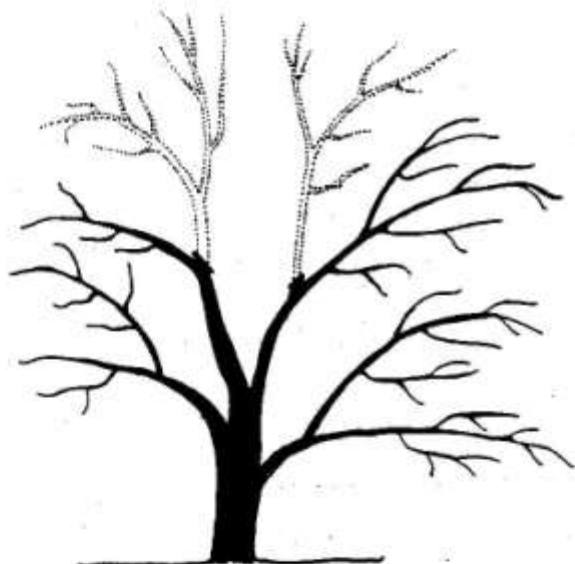
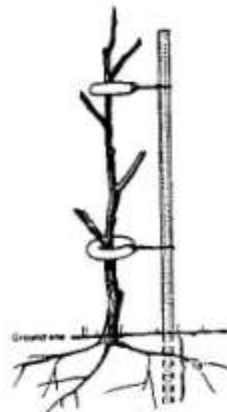


Fig. 16: One or more large limbs may be removed from excessively tall trees. Large cuts should be made close to the remaining limb and the wound should be coated with a wound dressing.



Method of staking a tree which needs support.

BULLETIN 591

Growing & Using Fruit at Home

CULTURAL PRACTICES AND PEST MANAGEMENT

OSU Cooperative Extension Service
The Ohio State University

Pruning Tree Fruit

At planting, fruit trees should be headed back to 24" to 28" above the ground (Fig. 11). All broken or damaged limbs should be removed. This procedure allows branches to form at desired levels, improves the strength of the tree and provides a balance between the top and roots.

As the branches reach 4 to 6 inches in length, spring loaded clothes pins can be used to form strong crotch angles (Fig. 12). They should be removed at the end of the first season. Branches which begin to grow at 18 inches or lower can be cut off during the summer. Sometimes in peaches only one or two limbs begin near the union. If limbs are above the union, select one and allow this to grow upright and begin to branch. In

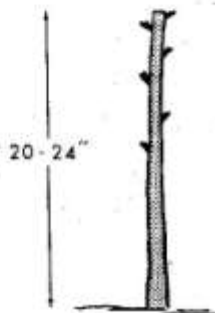


Fig. 11: Young tree pruned at planting.



Fig. 12: Form well-spaced laterals and strong crotches by training trees when they are young. Clothes pins are good to hold small branches at position desired. Remove clothes pins at the end of the growing season.

March, prune the tree as if it were just planted. However four short branches near the top can remain.

After one and two years of growth, all lateral branches below 18 inches or below the first lateral are removed. Remove limbs which have narrow crotch angles (less than 45°).

Apple and pear trees are pruned to the central leader system which allows 3 to 4 groups of four branches to develop. The central leader is cut in March at 18 inches to 24 inches above the last group of limbs to insure the development of more limbs (Fig. 13). A two or three year old apple or pear needs more limb spreading and should look like Figure 14.

Apricot, peach, nectarine, cherry and plum should be trained to an open center system. After the first year of growth, four branches are chosen and all limbs in the center of the tree are removed as in Figure 15. Pruning during the next several years, begins with removal of shoots in the center, allowing spreading and reducing upright growth when the tree reaches maximum height of 6 to 8 feet for peach and nectarine and 10 to 14 feet for cherry, plum and apricot. Fruiting limbs need the small diameter branches thinned with 4 to 6 inches between them. As main limbs get longer, the ends of limbs are headed back 6 to 8 inches to increase strength.

Pruning Old, Neglected Apple and Pear Trees

Old apple trees which have been neglected for many years become very tall and dense. Reducing the height of these trees usually requires the removal of large limbs. When this is done, the cuts should be made flush with the bark of a lower limb (Figure 16). Other thinning cuts will be needed in lower portions of the tree, but likely will involve smaller limbs.

Pear Trees and Fireblight

Pear trees do not need to be pruned as much as apple trees. Neither is obtaining wide-crotch angles so essential, for the pear tree has tough wood and is not so vulnerable to splitting or breaking. Pear trees do need some training, however, and the method shown for apples should be the pattern followed. Most cultivars of pears are subject to fireblight, which kills infected areas. It is rather difficult and unwise to try to stop the blight by pruning out damaged areas during the growing season, for the causal organisms can be spread by the pruning shears. Ordinarily, one should wait until the dormant season to cut out the infected wood, and even then the cut should be made 8 to 10 inches below the affected portion, preferably back to an outward-growing branch.