

Meetings and Announcements

Annual Pruning Demonstrations

We plan to offer our annual pruning demonstrations for deciduous fruit trees January 11, Wednesday, and January 12, Thursday. Location is at our demonstration orchard adjacent to the UC Cooperative Extension building, 1031 S. Mt. Vernon Ave. For both days, the start time will be 12 noon. Trees will include peaches, apricot and cherry, and also grapevines. We plan to have on-hand for sale our publication *Pruning Deciduous Fruit and Nut Trees*, the best on this subject I have found. If you want to learn about fruit trees, please feel welcome to attend. There is no charge nor is pre-registration required. Mohammad Yaghmour, our Advisor for commercial orchards, will lead the demonstration.

Horticulture Classes for Landscapes and Gardens

We expect to begin a series of horticulture classes in February, 2023. The topics will be similar to those of past classes; for example, climate, soils and water, irrigation design, landscape plant selection, tree and shrub pruning, fruit tree selection and care, vegetable growing, and so forth. A syllabus will be available when the class is ready.

40th Annual Landscape Management Seminar

The 40th Annual Landscape Management Seminar is planned for Thursday, February 16, 2023, at Hodels in Bakersfield. We will apply for eight hours of PCA credit including two hours of laws. The program is being developed, and we especially welcome back Dr. Jim Downer from UCCE to speak about pruning and tree diseases.

Spring 2023 Horticultural Tour

Our offering of horticultural tours of gardens and landscapes was interrupted by Covid. Indeed, plans are underway for our horticultural tour to England, Scotland and Wales, in spring, 2023. The dates are May 12 departure and May 27 return. There will be more information available from me via the Greenscene and at the Travel Gallery website at <https://www.travelgallery.com/> as available.

Pruning Deciduous Fruit Trees in the Home Orchard

There are three pruning phases in the life of a deciduous fruit tree. The first occurs at planting, when the first cut should be made to foster development of a vase-shaped structure, since an open-center form is preferred for almost all deciduous fruit species on the San Joaquin Valley floor. After a bareroot tree is planted, the trunk should be headed about knee high, or 24-32 inches above the soil surface. This cut may be emotionally difficult to make, because it may seem \$15 of a \$20 tree has been removed. In reality, this most-important cut serves to establish low orientation points of structural branches (a low head), which will allow most pruning, harvesting, and pest management to be performed without a ladder during the life of the tree. When we purchase a tree at the nursery, we are paying for a well-developed root system and the top (scion) variety. The upper structure of the tree may be pretty, but should be removed upon planting. Trees in agricultural fields need higher heads for equipment passage, but at home a low head greatly facilitates tree care.

The second phase of pruning serves to establish structure, and this phase begins the year following establishment. The low heading cut made after planting will result in several branches growing outward at various directions and angles, and three or four strong, upwardly growing branches spaced at intervals around the trunk should be selected as scaffolds. Additional branches can be removed. Pruning the next few years emphasizes structural development, including a well-spaced system of scaffolds and laterals.

The third phase of pruning begins with the onset of maturity, which is 5 - 7 years for most fruit trees. At this stage, the tree should be pruned for fruit production, with consideration of the location of fruiting wood. Pruning at this stage serves to invigorate and direct growth of the tree, with a goal of keeping it forever young; that is, annually producing new fruiting wood. Deciduous fruits differ greatly in the amount and location of wood that should be removed. Of trees often found in home orchards, peaches should be pruned the most severely and cherries the least. A detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this article, but principal determinants for pruning are the location and amount of fruiting wood. For example, peaches bear fruit on terminal wood of the previous season, so well-spaced lateral shoots with flower buds are retained. For peaches, it is common to thin (remove) half to two-thirds of the laterals, and to head (shorten) remaining fruiting wood. Apricots, plums and sweet cherries bear fruit laterally on spurs, which live three, five, and ten years, respectively. Therefore, up to 1/3 of the wood may be removed in mature apricots, about 1/5 of the wood in plums, and only light annual pruning is needed for sweet cherries.

If you would like more information, UC Cooperative Extension has an excellent 47-page publication, no. 21171, titled *Pruning Fruit and Nut Trees*. It is available at the Cooperative Extension Office, 1031 S. Mt. Vernon Avenue, Bakersfield.

Or, attend our free pruning demonstrations typically held early January.

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