

Pruning fruit trees

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Regular pruning is important to control disease

Pruning means to thin out your tree, opening up the foliage. This controls disease because:

- It allows air movement & sunlight penetration
 - plants will dry more quickly, which reduces conditions for fungal diseases
 - the ultraviolet light in sunlight is fatal to many plant disease
- It allows better spray penetration
 - If trees are sprayed, the whole plant can be reached



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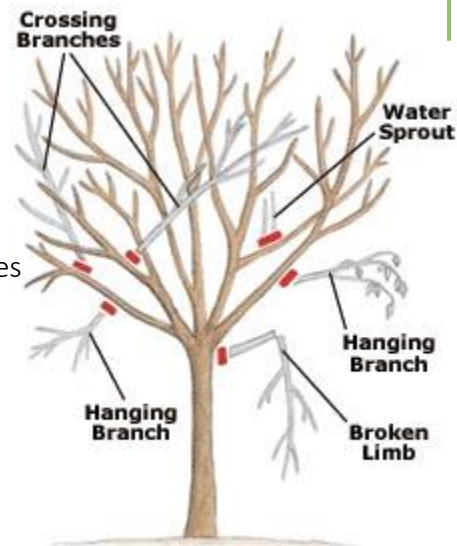
Pruning rules

Different fruit trees need different pruning, but generally these rules apply. You should remove:

- All dead, damaged or diseased branches (the three D's)
- Sprouts coming from the trunk ('suckers')
- Erect, vertical sprouts growing from main branches ('watersprouts')
- Branches growing down, toward the centre or crossing other branches
- Branches that compete with each other

Aim: to have evenly spaced branches diverging in a fractal-like pattern from the centre of the tree.

* These pruning steps help to prevent disease. To stop your tree from growing too big, you may consider further pruning still



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Pruning tips

- Clean your tools between each tree to prevent disease spread
 - Use a mixture of 9 parts water and 1 part bleach
- Use sharp shears to make clean cuts which heal more easily
 - No ragged edges, no torn or bruised bark
- Cut branches at the point where they diverge from larger branches
 - Don't leave stubs
- When cutting large limbs, use the three-cut technique to avoid damage
- Clean up after pruning: remove all the material you cut
 - Shred the cut material and use as mulch or compost



Keep the balance:

Don't overstress trees by cutting away too much in one time
Leave enough shelter for small birds and beneficial insects



Too much surface



Too long a stub



Too close to bud



Correct surface