General Pruning/Training for Apricot

UC DAVIS
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

fact sheet
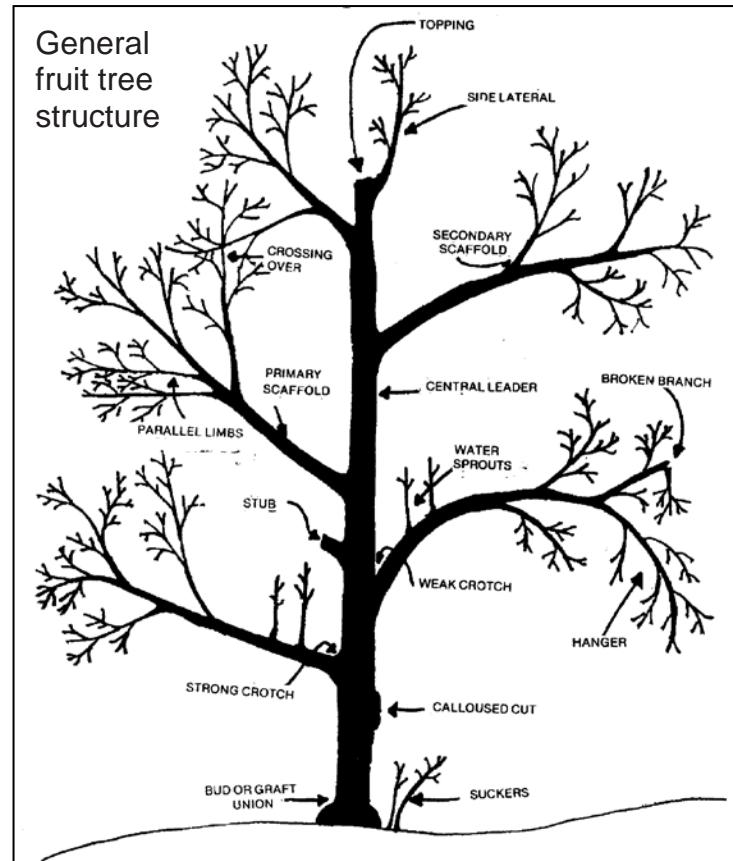
Why prune/train fruit trees?

- Establish a strong scaffold (main branch) system of wide-angled, well-spaced branches capable of supporting large crops with minimal branch breakage
- Help bring a young tree into production at an early age
- Maintain trees that are easier to thin excessive crop to get big fruit, manage pests and harvest
- Eliminate portions of the tree that tend to bear fruit of poor quality
- Maintain suitable branch spacing to allow penetration of light and spray materials
- Maintain desired shape, height and breadth of the tree

General rules for pruning/training apricot trees:

- Prune trees at planting time to balance the tops with the roots
- Prune young trees very lightly
- Prune mature trees more heavily, especially if they've shown little growth. Tree canopy should be kept open with considerable thinning-out in order to induce annual formation of fruit-bearing wood. Apricot fruit is borne on short spurs that are short lived

General fruit tree structure

- Prune when all danger from fall or early winter freeze has passed, but before full bloom in spring. This reduces the risk of disease and injury, however, apricots bloom very early; consequently, all or most of the flowers or young fruits are frequently killed by frost. Delaying pruning until after bloom may be advisable with apricots grown in an area that gets late frost frequently
- Prune less heavily if there is a light or no crop at all
- Prune the top portion of the tree more heavily than the lower portion as the top is where most vegetative growth occurs.
- Thin out more shoots toward the end of a well-pruned branch in a mature tree. This will increase fruit size and quality on the remaining shoots.
- Pruning too early in the dormant season can lead to the following problems:
  - Increased incidence of Cytospora canker, which enters the tree through pruning wounds
  - Increased internal damage
  - Increased sunscald of the bark

Prepared by Kitren Glozer, Louise Ferguson, and Mark Bell, 2007