

PRUNING



General Tips

- The ideal shape for a home fruit tree is an open vase shape- like a wine glass. Think about this shape as you build up the base structure for your trees.
- Most gardening books have good diagrams to demonstrate pruning if you would like to see these instructions in a visual form.
- Clean tools well with methylated spirits between trees to avoid spreading disease.
- Cutting above bud- slight angle away from and just above the bud- use sharp secateurs.

Cutting off branches big or small

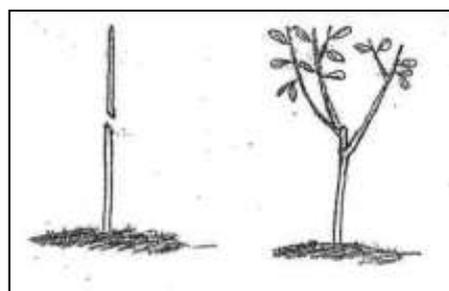
- Cut exactly beside the collar of the branch- the 'rings' around the base leaving the rings in place
- Use the right size tool.
If the branch is fatter than your little finger use loppers
If the branch is wider than a broomstick use a pruning saw.

Pruning Fruit Trees - apples, pears, plums, red currants, gooseberries

It is important to prune your fruit trees well for their first four or five years to establish a strong frame and useful shape. Un pruned trees often grow high and ungainly, get more diseases from overcrowding of branches, tend to suffer from more structural damages. The fruit is slow to ripen and difficult to pick or thin.

First year after grafting

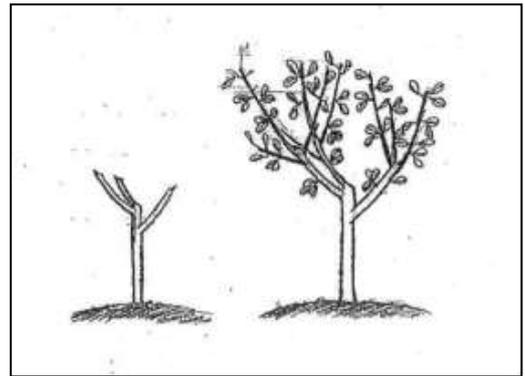
Prune back to approximately 50cm high just above 3 good buds that face different directions.



Second year or new bare rooted trees

Depending on how the next year growth has formed you have the choice

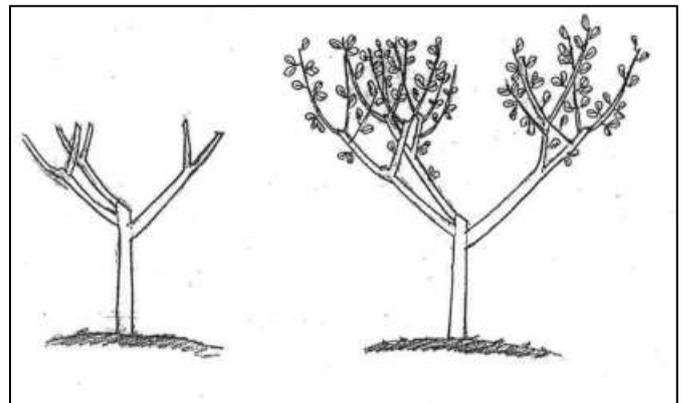
1. If there are three nice positioned branches not too high up 50-80cm you can select them as you next layer and cut out all other branches below and above. Nice positioned branches are ones that are upward growing between 20 and 40 degrees out from the trunk and all growing in different directions and all within a 30 cm span of the trunk. Then on each of those three branches go down 2/3 and cut just above an outward facing bud.



2. If not start fresh as above I know it is hard to reduce it to what looks like a stick but long term benefits are great.

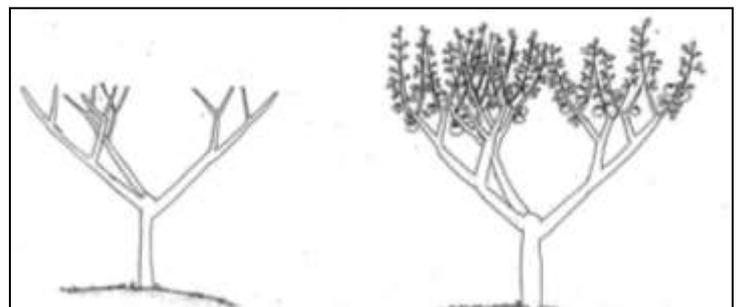
Third Year

Cut out all new branches that have appeared anywhere on the trunk leaving only the three branches you chose last year and their new young growth - unless one of your branches is poor and you might choose a new one to replace it. On your three chosen branches cut off all inward growing new branches. All outward growing new branches cut back about 2/3 to an outward facing bud.



Fourth Year

As above but now working at the branch level - making sure the next young branches you choose to keep are well spaced and growing in a useful upright way. The ones you keep cut back 2/3 to an outward bud as before.



Fifth Year onwards

Pears and plums: Prune only in summer now and only when really necessary- disease, damage or overcrowding

Apples, red currants and gooseberries: First cut out all damaged and inward growing branches. Secondly cut out all branches growing from below your third year cuts. Now continue to move those branches up and out by cutting them back 2/3 to an outward facing bud as before.