

**Road’s End Farm & Nursery**

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**Tips and Tidbits**

Not pruning is almost ALWAYS the wrong thing to do. Pruning can control the growth rate of a tree. Heavy pruning stimulates lots of new growth but less fruit production. However, pruning too little can result in a crowded tree with poor branching and yields. Most gardeners have the latter problem. By regulating how much you prune, you can keep the tree in optimum health and production.

Remember:

1. The number one goal for pruning and training is to increase fruit production.
2. The number two goal for pruning and training is improve tree health.

**Dormant pruning** will stimulate vegetative growth

**Summer pruning** will prevent or stop vegetative growth

Apples, pears, cherries, and plums fruit mostly on 2- to 3-year-old wood and fruit spurs produce for 5 or more years, while peaches, nectarines, and figs fruit mostly on last year’s growth so should have up to 50% removed each year.

Pruning watersprouts back to 2 buds will make those buds turn into fruiting spurs on apple, pear, cherry and plum.

Angle your cuts and buds in the direction you want the branch to grow.

Mature trees that have not been pruned can have up to 1/3 of the branches removed per season without harm.

A few large pruning cuts accomplish more than many small cuts.

When pruning, avoid leaving stubs or pruning cuts that are made flush with the point of branch attachment. Note the presence of branch collars. The branch collar appears as a swelling at the base of the branch where attached. Branch collars are rings of wood with living cells which protect the pruning cut and generate new tissue that covers the wound in time. Thinning cuts should be made at the edge of the branch, leaving the collar intact.

No research supports the use of wound sealing or tree sealant materials on pruning cuts; leave them exposed to air dry after pruning.

When you dormant prune, it is preferable to prune stone fruits in late February to mid-March rather than in the fall or early winter. Pruning wounds made late in the dormant season heal faster than those made earlier. Dormant pruning of apple and pear can be at any time after full dormancy (usually December and later).

**Branch Training**

Fruiting primarily takes place on horizontal branches. Proper spreadinghelps encourage wider, stronger branch angles that are less susceptible to breaking under a fruit or snow load. 45 – 60 degrees is the optimum angle in most situations.

Small new growth branches can be spread with toothpicks, clothespins or commercial and homemade spreaders. Fishing weights on string can also be used to weigh down and spread small branches. Larger spreaders can be made from 1” x 1” wood in varying lengths with a finish nail inserted in each end (cut off the heads). Branches can also be spread by tying down to stakes, cinder blocks or sometimes other branches below. Spreading should be done only when branches are limber after the sap has started to flow (usually April) and before the wood starts to harden (usually July).