



# HOME & GARDEN

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April 2009

## Fruit Tips

### Culture

- This is a good time to plant tree fruits and small fruits. Fruits that require little or no spraying include figs, European plum, tart cherry, Asian pears, and all the small fruits.
- Before planting a backyard orchard, give particular attention to air flow and water drainage. Avoid low areas, where cold air can gather in early spring, killing flower buds and flowers. Don't plant in compacted, poorly drained soils. Be prepared to keep new fruit plants well-watered for the first few growing seasons.
- Before planting blueberries, be sure that your soil pH is in the 4.3-5.3 range and the area has been heavily amended with organic matter.
- Thin bramble canes so that new shoots are spaced at least 6 inches apart.
- Fruit trees can be pruned through the bloom period. Remove dead, broken and crossing branches and keep younger trees pruned to a Christmas tree shape.
- The heavy sap flow that results from pruning grapes at this time is normal and no cause for alarm.
- Prune peach trees during the bloom period or immediately after. Peach trees require severe pruning to encourage the development of new wood on which next year's fruit buds will form. Maintain an open vase shape to encourage good air circulation and fruiting throughout your peach trees. Shorten branches and thin out weak growth.
- Prune out black knot cankers on plum and cherry trees. These are rough, dark irregular growths that appear on branches.
- Fertilize strawberry plants with a balanced fertilizer if the plants were not fertilized last summer. Pull the blooms off of newly planted strawberry plants for the first growing season.
- Blueberry plants should be fertilized with ammonium sulfate at bloom and again when fruits first appear. Carefully apply the fertilizer in a ring 12 inches from the base of each plant.

### Insect

- Now that leaves have unfolded, it is too late to spray a dormant oil or liquid lime sulfur. Apply petal fall sprays to control a wide variety of insect pests on fruit trees especially apple and peach. For more information, order a copy of EB 125, MD Home Fruit Production Guide. The cost is \$8.00.

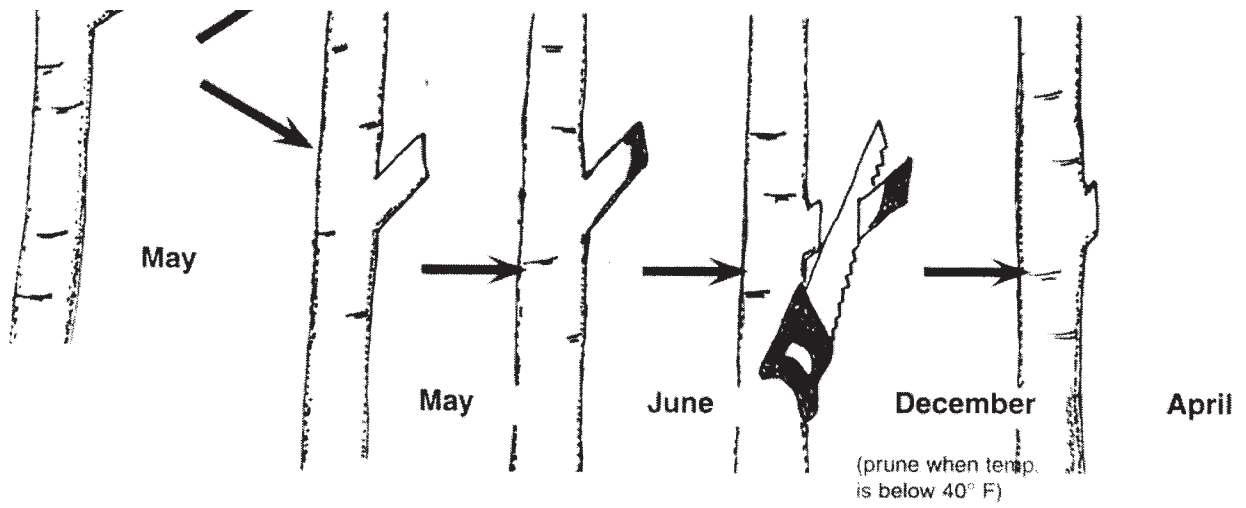
### Disease

- Brown rot of stone fruits can be best controlled with fungicide sprays during the bloom period.
- Grapevines should be sprayed with a fungicide to prevent black rot disease when shoots elongate and during the bloom period.
- Fireblight may be observed on susceptible apple and pear cultivars during and after the bloom period if the weather is warm and wet. The "ugly stub" pruning method for fireblight control should be used for cutting out all affected plant material. (see diagram next page)

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**"Ugly Stub" cut removes canker in winter**

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