



• SINCE 1923 •

# PRUNING DIFFERENT TYPES OF FRUIT TREES

Just for a moment, think about the last time you chomped on a mouthful of juicy peaches, savored freshly-made apricot jam or tasted a slice of warm apple pie. We take great delight from these and a variety of other fruits that grow in great abundance throughout the Intermountain West. It's hard to imagine life without them.

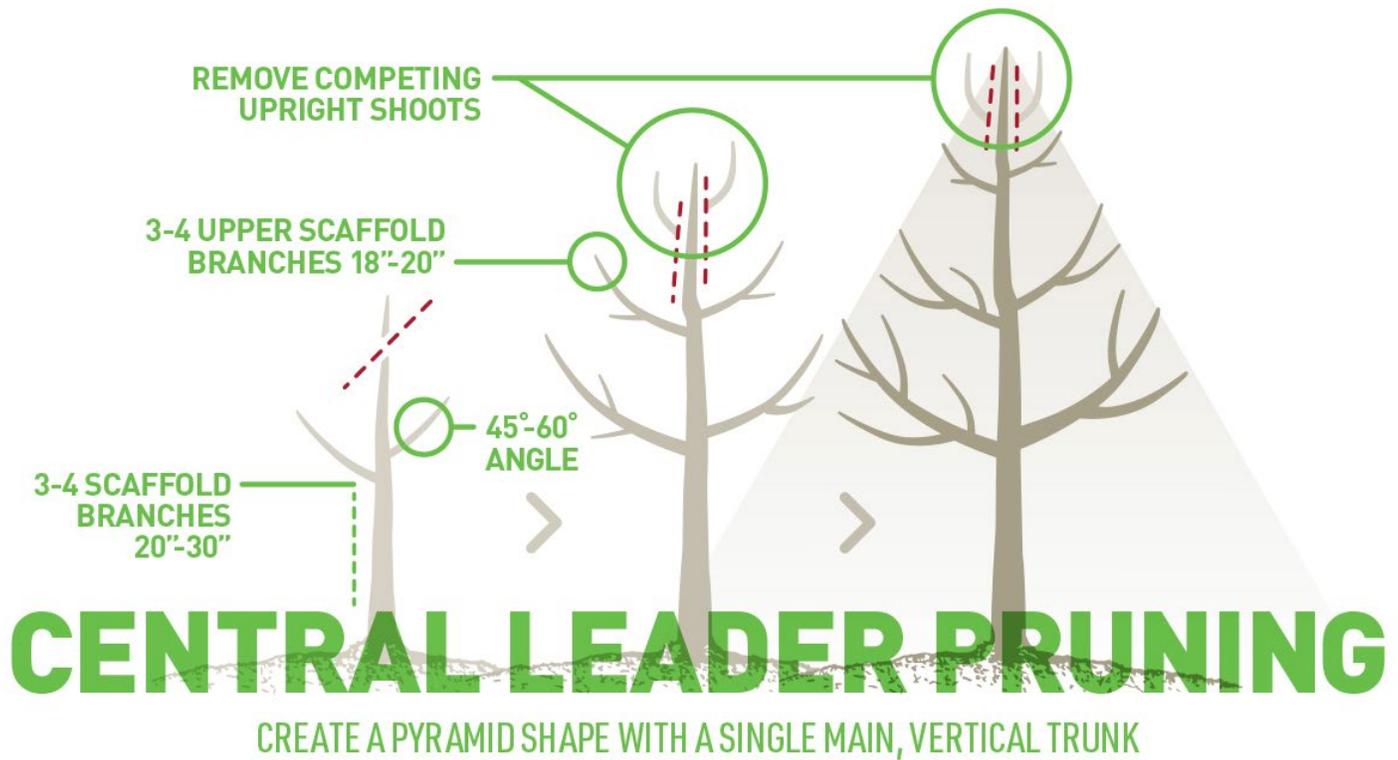
One key to preserving these delicious traditions is maintaining the health and productivity of the fruit trees in your own backyard through proper pruning methods. Pruning will improve the overall health and growth of your fruit tree. Pay attention to the structure of your tree annually, and you'll add years of better production.

## WHEN TO START PRUNING

The ideal time to prune your fruit trees is in the late winter and early spring before bud-break, bloom and leaf emergence. This is when the trees are dormant, which reduces stress and allow cuts to heal or harden off. No foliage makes pruning easier. There may be rare occasions when it's necessary to prune in the summer, for instance if you need to open a canopy for greater light penetration.

Thinning overgrown trees to remove dead or unhealthy limbs/branches to allow for better light infiltration is one of several reasons to prune your fruit trees. The more leaves exposed to good light, the more energy that is produced. Thinning the limbs also helps produce fruit with less bruising and scarring.





Pruning controls the height of a tree and the size of the branches. Three or four main branches with smaller limbs will carry fruit better than long, thin branches and improves weight distribution on your fruit tree.

Pruning makes it possible for you to shape the tree. You can decide the height of the branches for picking fruit and/or how low to the ground they are for mowing around them.

## HOW TO PRUNE DIFFERENT FRUIT TREES

Although fruit trees are generally pruned to a height comfortable for picking, it's important to understand that each species or type of fruit tree should be pruned differently.

Fruit trees that produce “pome fruits,” including apples and pears, have a core of several small seeds surrounded by a tough membrane.

### APPLE, PEAR & OTHER POME FRUIT TREES

For these types of fruit trees, we recommend the “central leader” style of pruning, which creates a sort of pyramid shape

with a strong center. To do this, preserve a single main, vertical trunk by removing competing upright shoots. Select and prune around three or four scaffold branches about 20-30 inches up from the ground with three or four upper scaffold branches about 18-20 inches above the first set. All the scaffold branches should be angled about 45-60 degrees from the trunk.

Apples and pears both develop better fruit on horizontal branches. Keep in mind that fruiting buds on apple and pear trees produce more fruit on terminal buds or buds at the end of a branch or spur, so take care to preserve as many of these buds as possible when pruning. Apples and pears produce fruit on 2-year-old branches/spurs.

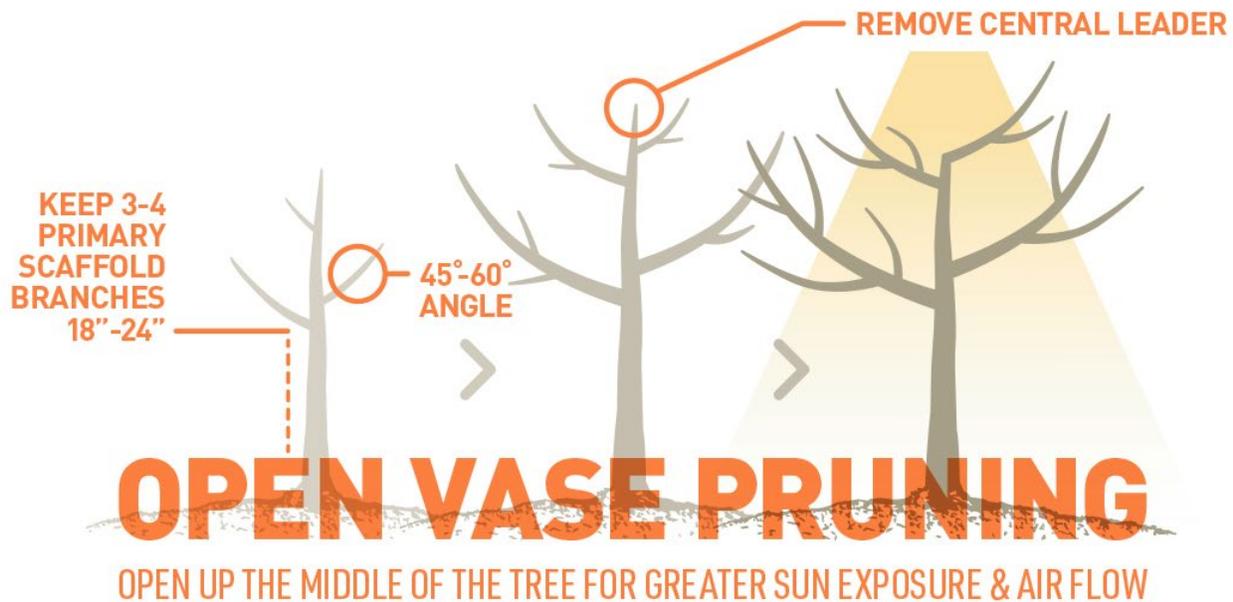
“Stone fruits,” including peaches, nectarines, apricots, cherries and plums, have large, hard pit or “stone” in its fruit. The proper pruning method for the stone fruits is “open vase” shape, which means opening up the middle of the tree to allow for greater light and air flow in the center.

This method involves having three or four main scaffold branches evenly spaced around the trunk about 18-24 inches up from the ground, angled 45 to 60 degrees from the trunk.



**TIP: Fruiting buds on apple and pear trees produce more fruit on buds at the end of 2-year-old branches or spurs. Avoid pruning off fruiting spurs to preserve as many of these buds as possible.**





Prune off 50 to 80 percent of last year's growth to stimulate new growth for future production. Most all fruit trees can be pruned this way.

### PEACH, CHERRY & OTHER STONE FRUIT TREES

Peaches and apricot trees should be pruned on an open vase system. Fruiting buds on peach and apricot trees only occur on the second year of growth on branches. Prune out about 50 percent of the branches that produced last year and leave enough new growth for the fruit to bloom. Pay attention to the weight distribution. Cutting that much of the tree out will stimulate new growth for next year's production and pruning. Remove all suckers, shoots coming from the roots or stem below the graft, on a regular basis. Once harvested, enjoy your peaches and apricots dried, frozen, canned/ bottled, made into jam or eaten fresh.

Sweet cherry trees grow tall at a fast rate and tart cherry trees naturally stay smaller. With sweet cherries, skip a single year of pruning in the open vase style. Fruiting buds occur on older wood in spurs, small but noticeable clusters of buds that produce flowers. Both sweet and tart varieties of cherries are grown in our region, and are enjoyed fresh off the tree, in

mouthwatering pies, and much more.

Whether new or established, plum trees need annual pruning in an open vase style. As the tree fills out with new growth, continue to prune to form a canopy.

### GROW & ENJOY MORE

When you finish pruning, be sure to dispose of all removed branches. It's important to burn or take away any wood that appears diseased or had past problems.

The better you get at pruning your fruit tree's branches, the more likely you will enjoy bigger, sweeter fruit, even on lighter production years.

When all the work is done, may you relish the fruits of your labor and let us know how we can offer greater service whether you're planting, pruning or preserving.

*For more up-to-date information on all fruit crops grown in the Intermountain region, along with details on disease, pest control, spray chemicals and other resources, the USU Extension "Intermountain Commercial Tree Fruit Production Guide" is available at [www.intermountainfruit.org](http://www.intermountainfruit.org).*

*Information for this article was provided by Aaron Jaussi, Branch Manager, Provo IFA Country Store; Nick Loveland, Certified Arborist, Assistant Manager, Ogden IFA Country Store; and Kent Mickelsen, Utah Certified Nurseryman, IFA Country Store.*



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