

Title of Workshop: Pruning Fruit Trees WORKshop

Length: 60+ minutes

Objectives:

- By the end of this workshop, participants will...
 - Be familiar with the three common pruning tools (scissor shears, loppers, pruning saws) and know which tool to use when a certain cut is desired
 - Know basic guidelines for which wood to remove when pruning fruit trees (remembered as the four “D’s”; Diseased, Dying, Damaged, Dumb branches)
 - Have practiced pruning

Materials:

For the workshop we will use

- ladder
- rubbing alcohol
- towel to apply rubbing alcohol
- one-handed pruning shears
- two-handed loppers
- folding pruning saw
- bow saw

Overview of Workshop:

Workshop Opening:

To begin the workshop, find an open area to welcome participants. Parking lots near orchards may have nearby picnic tables that can be utilized as a gathering location. Have the tools and sterilizing alcohol ready at the trees for later.

During the Workshop:

Take 10 minutes to discuss the tools that are used in pruning. Mention that one-handed pruning shears are meant for branches thinner than ones pinky, and two-handed loppers are appropriate for branches thinner than one’s thumb as part of their respective tool descriptions for people to remember.

Next, gather around a tree to demonstrate the principles for pruning a tree. Discuss the four D’s of pruning (dead, diseased, damaged, and dumb branches) and show the participants which branches should be removed on the tree. Use the full range of tools that you discussed previously to solidify the appropriate use of each tool. Demonstrate a three-part cut with a saw to show the participants how to use a saw so that the tree is not damaged as the limb falls.

Discuss the unique growth habits for the fruit varieties that you will be working on. Fruiting habits are fundamentally different between trees. For example, peaches will fruit from second year wood, while apples will fruit from spurs that begin forming on third year wood. The different fruiting habits influence the pruning guidelines when fruit production is the focus of pruning efforts.

Workshop Closing:

The above discussion and demonstration should provide enough information to be sufficient a stand-alone event, but hands-on work in the presence of an instructor will build confidence for the participants. Distribute the tools and have the participants sterilize the equipment. Explain the reason for sterilizing (such as to prevent transmission of diseases such as fire blight between trees).

Have the participants form groups and begin working on the trees. Groups of three or four can work together for dwarf trees, while groups of five or more may be best for larger trees so that participants are working near one another. The duration of the hands-on portion can vary, but at least thirty of practice is recommended so that participants become comfortable with the process. Together, the demonstration with thirty minutes of practice should take an hour.

When finished, have everyone return the tools back to a central location. This helps prevent tools from being lost in the orchard, or from accidentally being carried home in pockets. Having a sign-in and sign-out sheet for the tools will also help keep establish accountability for the return and well-being of the tools.

Audience:

The workshop is designed for adults. The workshop content assumes that the participants have no previous pruning experience.