



INFORMATION SHEET – PRUNING APPLE TREES

HOW TO PRUNE SPUR BEARING APPLE TREES

This article deals with pruning of bush tree. First, fruit is produced from shoots which are in their second (or later) year. One of the aims of pruning is to produce a balance (roughly half and half) between side shoots produced this year and side shoots produced last year. The aim is to provide a crop of apples in the current year and sufficient shoots for next year's crop.

Remember, when you prune during winter (while the tree is dormant), this will invigorate the tree, causing it to grow more during the following season. If you prune during summer this will cause the tree to grow less during that growing season. Spring pruning has an effect somewhere between winter and summer pruning.

HOW TO PRUNE BUSH TREES

The first pruning should occur immediately after planting (normally November or December) - make sure you know if you have a one or two year old tree. The examples below show pruning starting at a one year old tree.

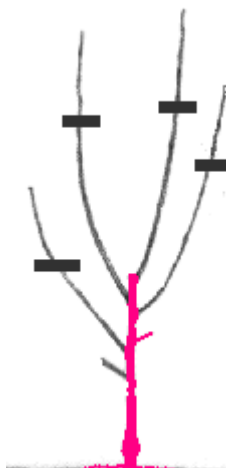


Cut here

PRUNE A ONE YEAR OLD TREE

A one year old tree should be pruned immediately after planting - cut off the top half of the trunk with a sharp pair of secateurs.

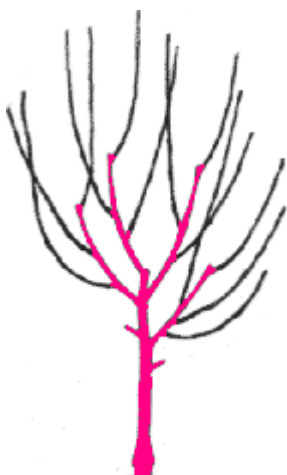
Before cutting, make sure that the bottom half contains at least four buds or formed branches. If not, make the cut higher, above the fourth bud. to see pictures of a real one year old (maiden) apple tree before and after pruning.



PRUNE A TWO YEAR OLD TREE

Prune from December to February. the previous year growth should not be pruned. side shoots should all be pruned by a third 8 or 9 buds- see the thick black lines.

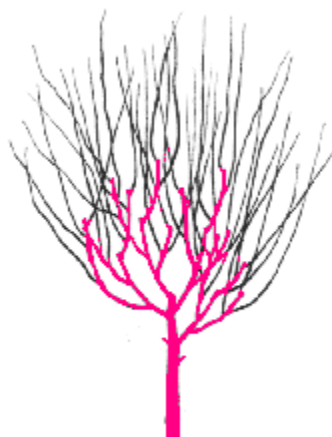
When pruning, cut just above an outward facing bud - this bud will then produce a side shoot in the spring which will grow away from the centre of the tree.



PRUNE A THREE YEAR OLD TREE

Prune from December to February. Pruning is similar to the two-year old tree Again previous years growth is left un-pruned and side shoots should all be pruned by a third.

Always prune to just above an outward facing bud.



PRUNE A FOUR YEAR OLD TREE

Prune from December to February. Pruning is the similar to the three-year old tree – again previous years growth is left un-pruned unless it is diseased. The side shoots should all be pruned by a third. Always prune to just above an outward facing bud.

Any growth running into the centre of the tree is removed at a main branch.



A five year old tree can be considered mature and the basic shape will have been established. Pruning should consist of keeping the centre of the tree relatively clear of growth, removing all weak or diseased growth and keeping the tree within the space available.

There is now an advantage in carrying out both summer and winter pruning, during the summer (late August) cut the leaders of each main branch by half, lateral growth from the main branches are cut to 4 buds, to encourage these to develop as fruit spurs.