

# Organic Orchard Pruning

A detailed procedure outlining the steps for pruning fruit trees in organic orchards to enhance fruit production, facilitate air circulation, and promote overall tree health.

## Step 1: **Tool Preparation**

Sanitize all pruning tools with a solution of one part bleach to nine parts water to prevent the spread of disease. Ensure tools are sharp to make clean cuts.

## Step 2: **Tree Assessment**

Examine each tree for dead, diseased, or damaged limbs. Note the branches that interfere with each other and identify areas with poor air circulation.

## Step 3: **Removal Process**

Start by carefully removing all dead, diseased, and damaged branches, cutting them at the base without harming the trunk or main branches. Proceed to thin out areas with dense foliage to improve air circulation.

## Step 4: **Structural Pruning**

Identify the central leader and main scaffold branches. Prune any competing branches to reinforce the tree's natural structure. Ensure that the central leader is the tallest part of the tree.

## Step 5: **Shaping**

Trim back overly long branches to encourage fruiting spurs and maintain the overall shape of the tree. Aim for evenly spaced branches that allow light to penetrate to the lower limbs.

## Step 6: **Clean Up**

Collect all pruned material and remove it from the orchard to reduce disease pressure. Dispose of or compost this material appropriately according to local organic waste guidelines.

# **General Notes**

## **Safety First**

Wear appropriate personal protective equipment such as gloves, eye protection, and sturdy footwear while pruning to prevent injuries.

## **Seasonal Timing**

The best time for pruning fruit trees is during the dormant season, usually late winter or early spring, to minimize stress on the trees.

## **Pruning Limits**

Avoid removing more than 25-30% of a tree's canopy in a single season as this can stress the tree and reduce fruit production.