

Bring back an old apple tree with TLC

NEWARK, Del - Have an old apple tree that's not productive anymore? Or one that produces

poor quality fruit that's not worth picking?

Instead of letting all that potential food go to waste, why not bring the tree back into production? Probably all it needs is a heavy pruning, says University of Delaware Extension Plant Pathologist Bob Mulrooney.

This winter get out there with your pruning saw and clippers and give it a good shaping up, he advised. Remove suckers, diseased and broken limbs. Also remove branches that rub or that have small, weak, v-shaped crotches.

Most old trees need to have their size controlled, too. For ease of pruning, picking and spraying, an apple tree shouldn't be over 20 feet tall, says Mulrooney.

"You may have to remove several feet from the top," he said. "Get a good book on pruning fruit trees."

"What you're after is a strong central leader, if possible. Aim for a pyramidal shape rather than an umbrella shape.

"Apples are a heavy crop to support. You want branches that can bear the weight without breaking," Mulrooney added, to bring the tree back into production it needs to be fed. Have the soil treated and lime accordingly, he advised. A neglected tree will probably need about a pound of actual nitrogen applied in the early spring.

"Don't be disappointed if the first year you don't get on a

bumper crop. Depending on the amount of pruning done, as well as other factors, the number of blooms may be small the first year of rejuvenation," he said.

"If by some chance you should get a heavy crop, thin it severely, to keep the tree from switching to biennial production. Yellow Delicious are especially prone to this problem if they aren't thinned out enough the first year after heavy pruning," Mulrooney added.

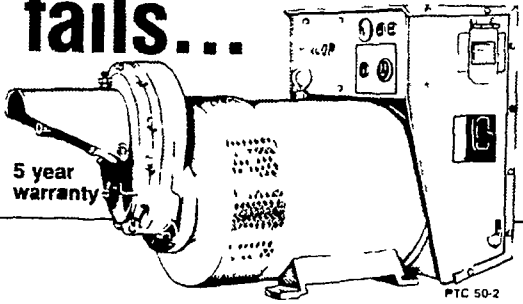
To ensure top-quality fruit, start a pesticide spray schedule before bud-break this spring and continue it throughout the season to protect the apples from insects and disease, he said.

Check with your county extension agent for a copy of the extension bulletin on "Sprays For Home Fruit Plantings," or write. MAIL ROOM, AGRICULTURAL HALL, UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE, NEWARK, DE 19711.

"Don't waste your time trying to bring an old peach tree back into production, though," says Mulrooney. "It's probably borer infested and has a poor framework. But an old apple tree's worth working with."

NOTE: Except for apples it is best to delay pruning of fruit trees until March. Pruning peaches and other stone fruits now may stimulate new growth, should a mid-winter thaw occur soon after cutting, and could result in winter damage.

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Co-op hires new manager

BERWICK — The Berwick Vegetable Cooperative has hired a new manager.

Angelo M. Venditti began work as the Co-op manager last Monday. The hiring of Venditti was an-

nounced to the members by Earl T. Miller, Vice President of the Co-op Board of Directors.

Venditti comes to the Co-op with 17 years of managerial experience in the produce business in the Berwick area, Miller noted.



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