

**Seeding,  
Weeding  
and mulch  
more**

*For the avid gardener*

## Prune now for fruit and flower

As spring approaches many gardeners take a strong interest in their woody landscape plants, County Agent, Joseph H. Way said.

However, berry plants, fruit trees, grapes, and roses also need attention to perform their best. Here are some things to keep in mind to prune for flower and fruit.

### Berries

As a rule, berry plants like raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, and currants produce best on young wood. Removing old and weak growth will improve your crop. Berry pruning is not difficult, but you may be more likely to do a good job of it if you understand why seasonal pruning is important.

Cutting away less productive portions of a plant allows more water and nutrients to enter remaining strong buds, stems and branches. The whole reason to plant berries is to enjoy the fruit, so why not take the time to manage your plants for the best crop possible?

Pruning berries means removing, shortening and thinning. Weak slender wood bears few fruit. Long unbranched stems grow out of reach and produce few fruiting side shoots. Crowded stems are very poor producers. Dormant season pruning will give you time to get your berry patch ready for spring growth. Apply these pruning specifics to each of the berry groups.

• **Red Raspberries** — Keep canes or stems 8 inches apart and narrow each row to 12 or 18 inches wide so you will have about two and one-half canes per foot of row. Remove all suckers that grow out of the soil and around the base of the plant.

Shorten remaining canes that grow from the crown of the original plant by cutting 20 to 25 percent from the top.

• **Fall-bearing red raspberries** (such as Heritage) — These produce very late-season berries on wood grown the same season and are easy to maintain. Cut all canes to the ground in the fall after harvesting or in March, before new growth begins. Later this spring, once growth begins, prune canes to the same spacing as outlined above for regular season raspberries and remove suckets. Do not shorten any stems during the spring or summer growing season.

• **Black Raspberries** — Shorten the lateral or side branches to eight inches to encourage more flowering and fruiting stems. Don't be afraid to take out some of the stronger stems to prevent crowding as canes will fill out in the spring. Pinch new stem growth when it reaches 18 inches by removing the tip or the stem. This will encourage lateral shoots that will flower well.

• **Purple Raspberries** — Shorten the lateral canes to 12 inches and keep crowding to a minimum.

• **Blackberries** — Shorten laterals to about 12 or 18 inches to make plants more compact. Cut out all laterals close to the ground since shade from upper stems will reduce their flowers. Fruit from pruned lateral will be far larger than fruit from unpruned weak wood. Thin canes to 10 inches apart and pinch new canes when they reach 30 inches long to stimulate fruiting side shoots.

• **Blueberries** (plants three years and older) — Remove small, bushy growth near the base of plants. Each year remove one or two of the fruit bearing branches with the overall goal of maintaining plants with wood no older than five years.

• **Currants** — On 2-year-old plants, leave six to eight of the strongest shoots. On 3-year-old plants, remove weakest wood. On plants 4 years and older, maintain a cutting schedule to have three shoots each of 1, 2, and 3-year-old wood. There should be no wood in your plant over 3 years old.

### Fruit Trees

Fruit trees also need some attention at this time of year for the same reasons you prune berry plants. Uniform branch spacing is important. Remove crowded branches and ones with narrow crotch angles. Water sprouts, the long unbranched stems that often grow straight up, should also be removed. Shorten long branches in the main portion of your tree to encourage slower growing spurs that bear the flowers and fruit. Do not remove all the twig growth from the main stems and branches

or you may have problems with sun-scald on the bark.

### Grapes

Grapes grow from shoots or buds on canes or branches grown the previous year. Some recent research suggests that heavy pruning is associated with high sugar content in grapes, while light pruning which leaves many buds on each arm or cane is associated with higher juice yields. Whatever method you use (and there are many), keep these points in mind:

• Prune every year in late winter

or early spring while plants are dormant.

• The best fruits are borne on pencil-sized canes.

• Most methods recommend keeping plants pruned to four lateral canes with 10 to 15 buds on each. Train two sets of parallel canes on supporting wire fence and tie loosely.

• When you remove other canes, be sure to leave at least two buds on four canes to develop into healthy canes for the next season's crop.

## Spray pests with dormant oil

A number of insect pests that spend the winter in shells, cocoons, or as eggs can be eliminated by spraying with dormant oil.

Dormant oil is especially effective against scale insects, mites that spend the winter in bark crevices, and the eggs of several caterpillars. It is especially effective on fruit trees, ornamental cherries and crabapples, and deciduous euonymus.

Dormant oil works by suffocating and because even eggs

have to breathe, that is why it is so widely effective. It will clog the breathing power of leaves as well as insects, so it should not be used on plants after the leaves come out or evergreen needles expand.

April is a good month to apply dormant sprays. The air temperature should be above 40 degrees (50° is better), and there should be no danger of frost for 24 hours. Make sure that your thoroughly cover the twigs, branches, and trunk so that the dormant oil can do its job.



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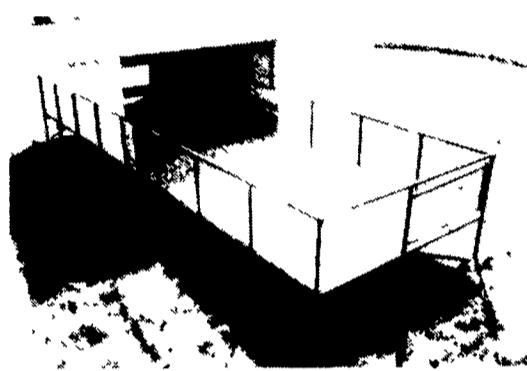


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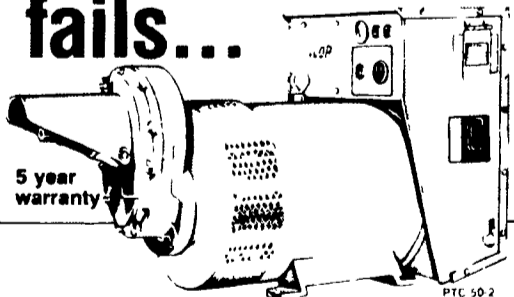
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