

# Pruning, Tree Health Discussed At Twilight Meeting

**MICHELLE RANCK**  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
NEFFSVILLE (Lancaster Co.) — A fruit growers' meeting late last week drew more than 70 area producers and experts to both review and exchange ideas about the produce industry.

Jim Erb, owner and operator of produce market Brooklawn Farms, hosted the event. Dr. Rob Crasswell, Penn State pomologist, began the evening with a review of peach tree training.

Experienced horticulturalist Ben Rogers, who prunes

Brooklawn trees each year, aided Crasswell in the presentation. The pair demonstrated pruning techniques on trees planted last year. Crasswell pointed out the significance of having an open-centered tree.

Dr. Jim Travis, Penn State fruit pathologist, said that by removing the suckers and ensuring that the tree is bare in the center aids tree health. "If the foliage is too thick, the inside of the tree defoliates. Pruning improves air circulation and light, so there's less area for canker to get

started," he said.

"To continue to force the branches outward, lightly clip the growing terminals to stunt the growth. That forces the lower branches out horizontally," said Crasswell. "That also keeps foliage there for canopy for photosynthesis needed for growth."

Thinning a tree takes advantage of the shoots on either side of the trunk.

The trees were given "min-

imal training" this year because of the trees' slow growth, said Rogers.

"There are two philosophies," said Crasswell. "One is to let the trees grow, and the other is to intervene and selectively chose branches to get the most growth. As Rogers and I said, there's not one right way."

However pruning too late, warned Crasswell, will put stress on the trees by taking away the young leaf surface,

which decreases cell division and results in smaller fruit.

"Left go, they'll be a brush pile by fall," said Rogers.

**Changing Branch Direction**  
Rogers demonstrated a technique traditionally used in apple trees. By scoring the stiff branches which tend to reach upward, "not hardly a quarter of the way through, one inch apart, you can put

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Lancaster extension agent Tim Elkner opened the evening with orchard owner Jim Erb, left.



Horticulture expert Ben Rogers, who prunes Brooklawn Farms' trees each year, demonstrates a technique to encourage the limbs to branch out more horizontally.

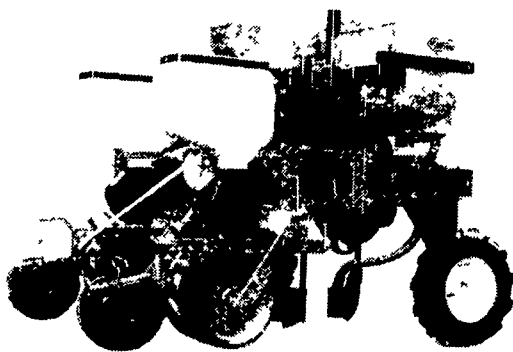
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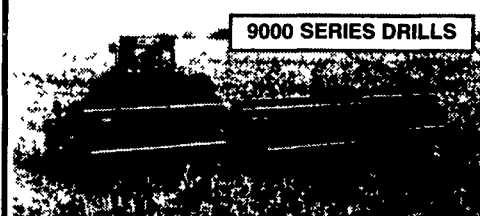


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