Penn State **Extension**

Home Orchard Calendar

extension.psu.edu

January

Week 1 ***Visit your Penn State County Extension Service Office to obtain literature on fruit growing in the home landscape:*** http://extension.psu.edu/counties

Week 2

Week 3

Week 4

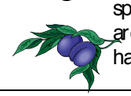
Week 5 Begin pruning **apple** and **pear** trees. Remember to maintain a pyramid shaped tree, wide and strong at the bottom and gradually tapered at the top. Tie dwarf trees to a support stake or trellis. (**Caution**: Avoid using tying materials that may girdle trees. Tie loosely to allow room for growth.) For disease and insect control, prune out dead wood. Also dispose of prunings.

February

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3



Prune cherry and **plum** trees. The **sour cherry** tree tends to be spreading and can be pruned to a bowl shape. **Sweet cherry** trees are best pruned like apple trees. **Plum trees** vary in their growth habit, but are often pruned to the bowl shape.

Week 4

Week 5

March

Week Late winter is the best time to **prune peach**, **nectarine**, and **apricot** trees because fall and early winter pruning may expose trees to winter injury and canker infections. The delay permits the grower to adjust the severity of pruning to the percentage of fruit buds that survived the winter. Strive to develop a bowl-shaped, or open-center tree.

Week 2 **Plant fruit trees** as soon as the ground can be worked and as soon as possible after arrival from the nursery. (Protect roots from drying out or freezing.) In backyard plantings, the sod beneath trees should be turned under and cultivated to prevent competition for moisture and nutrients. Thoroughly water trees. (Wait to fertilize until the ground has settled around the roots.)

Week 3 *Dormant Spray on **stone fruit** (prior to fruit bud swell).*

READ LABELS CAREFULLY before applying plant pest control materials.

Week 4

*Dormant Spray on **pears**.*

Week 5

Apply fertilizers just before bloom to maximize plant uptake (and minimize leaching).

FERTILIZER RATES
lbs of 5-10-10 (1 lb = 2 1/2 cups)

Apples (1-4 yrs old): 1/2 lb per tree per year of tree age
Apples (over 4 yrs): Omit fertilizer unless prescribed by leaf or soil analysis (or terminal shoot growth is less than 15 inches)
Peaches, Cherries, & Plums: 3/4 lb per tree per year of tree age
For an organic program, apply equivalent amounts of an organic fertilizer.

April

Week 1

Begin season-long pest control program on **peaches**, **plums**, and **cherries**. Spray every 10 days (except during bloom and close to harvest).*

Week 2 *Green Tip Spray on **apples***

Begin season-long pest control program on **apples** and **pears**. Spray every 10 days (except during bloom) until June. Then spray every 2 weeks (except close to harvest).*

Week 3 Broadcast 1/2 lb of 5-10-10 (or equivalent amount of organic **fertilizer** or another complete fertilizer) in a ring around each newly-planted tree. Keep fertilizer away from base of tree.

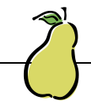
Week 4

Week 5 Measures to **control weeds** should begin early in the season. Maintain a weed-free area 4 ft from the trunk of young trees. Plant grass outside this weed-free area but keep closely mowed.

May

Week 1 **Install rodent guards** around the trunks of newly-planted trees. These also will keep you from hitting trees with the lawn mower.

Break off and discard **fire blight** infested **pear** terminals whenever they are found.



Week 2

Week 3 Attend a **backyard orcharding course**, and learn to eliminate some sprays by monitoring pests and weather.

Week 4 Discourage **deer** from eating young shoots by using commercially available repellents, or by tying bars of soap in the trees. Purchase and/or make ready Japanese beetle attractant traps.

Week 5

June

Week 1 Set out **Japanese beetle** traps (at least 25 ft from fruit trees) when first beetles appear.

Week 2

Hand-thin fruit trees. Excess fruits on **peach** and **plum** trees should be removed when about 3/4" in diameter. Leave 6" between peaches and 3" between plums. If **apple** trees are thinned no later than 50 days after full bloom, trees are more likely to have a return crop. Use thumb and forefinger to snap apples from the stem, leaving stem on tree. Thin to 6-8" apart. With experience, you will learn to balance crop load to tree growth.

Week 3 Remove and discard leaves with **insect egg** masses whenever they are found.

Spread scaffold limbs which have been selected to be the main framework of central leader trained trees. The first year, clothespins may be clasped above tender shoots to force branches to grow horizontally. In subsequent years, wide crotch angles are developed by using wooden spreaders or tying limbs down.

Week 4 ***Monitor peach trees for signs of lesser peach tree borer, and apply controls if needed.***

Week 5

Cultivate around trees, being careful not to disturb the roots. Irrigate young trees during dry periods. (Trees should receive equivalent of 1" of rainfall per week.) (If you decide to mulch, select a material that will not provide habitat for mice.)

PENNSTATE Cooperative Extension College of Agricultural Sciences

Contact the extension educator in your county for more information:
http://extension.psu.edu/counties
A Penn State guide to home fruit production, including where to purchase plants is available at http://agsci.psu.edu/fphg

* Home orchardists often choose to use organic sprays or home orchard sprays (general purpose mixtures). If you select an organic program, plant disease-resistance fruit varieties. There are many pests that attack fruit trees, and some insect and disease damage will still occur. Schedules are based on Mid-Atlantic conditions. Adjust dates for other regions. Follow label directions.

Home Orchard Calendar

July

Week 1

Flavor and overall color are the best guides for determining when to pick **cherries**. To prevent sharing your crop with birds, use exclusion or repulsion control techniques.

Week 2

Week 3

If you have a large **apricot** crop to harvest, consider yourself fortunate. Since blossoms open up early, they are likely to be killed by spring frost.

Week 4

Color changes during ripening are especially noticeable on **plums**. For canning, pick plums when they are well-colored and firm-ripe. For jams pick fruit when fully ripe. A mature plum tree may yield 1-1 1/2 bushels.

Week 5

Leaf analysis is the most reliable indicator of fruit tree nutritional needs. Mid-July to mid-August is the recommended time for sampling leaves of fruit trees for tissue analysis. Contact your County Extension Educator for details.

August

Week 1

Week 2

Just prior to maturity, the flattened sides of a **peach** swell. Begin harvesting peaches when the ground (background) color begins to change to yellow (yellow-fleshed peaches) or white (white-fleshed peaches). It is necessary to "spot pick" a peach tree 2 or 3 times to get the desired degree of ripeness. Peach trees being to bear fruit about 3 years after planting.

Week 3

Continue to subdue weed growth, and keep grass closely mowed.

Week 4

Many **summer apple varieties** should be "spot picked," like peaches, to attain the proper level of maturity.

Week 5

September

Week 1

Unlike other deciduous fruits, **pears** attain highest quality when they are picked in a slightly green stage.

Week 2

Begin harvesting fall **apple** varieties. To pick an apple, grasp it in the palm of your hand with your thumb over the stem end. Then lift to one side and upward, giving the fruit a slight turn. Be careful not to break off spurs that will bear the following year's fruit. **Dwarf trees** begin to bear fruit 2-4 years after planting. **Semi-dwarf trees** bear fruit 4-6 years after planting.

Week 3

Discourage **deer** from browsing and rubbing antlers against bark of trees, e.g., by using repellents.

For collecting overwintering codling moth larvae, corrugated cardboard bands may be wrapped around apple trunks.

Week 4

Remove fruits as they fall to ground. Remove and dispose of decaying hanging fruit.

Week 5

Take **soil samples**. Soil sampling kits are available at your local County Extension Service office.

October

Week 1

All fruits should be handled carefully to avoid bruising or puncturing. Mechanical injuries shorten the life of fruit and contribute to low quality. Storage in cool, moist areas helps extend the shelf life of fruit.

Week 2

Week 3

Check the ground around fruit trees for **mouse activity**. Be alert for mouse runs, breather holes, and tooth marks on fallen fruit. Normally, mice are not a problem in backyard fruit plantings where the grass is closely mowed and the ground around the tree is cultivated.

If the potential for **mouse** damage exists, consult your County Extension Service for current recommendations and precautions regarding mouse controls.

Week 4

Week 5

November

Week 1

Apply lime in accordance with soil test recommendations. For best results, incorporate lime with the soil.

Week 2

Remove **apple root suckers**.

Week 3

Fall planting should be conducted about a month after the first killing frost. Do not expose roots of nursery trees to freezing or drying conditions. (Do not prune or fertilize until April.)

Week 4

Week 5

Rake and burn fruit tree leaves (for insect and disease control).

December

Week 1

Remove and burn corrugated cardboard trunk bands.

Week 2

Order nursery stock well in advance of the planting date. Buy only from reputable nurseries that guarantee their stock.

Week 3

Week 4

Update the **record book** you keep on your fruit trees. Make sure you have recorded varieties, rootstocks, planting dates, lime and fertilizer applications, pesticides, and what's most important—***yields***.

Week 5

Now you can see that fruit production is a year-round commitment!

For more information on home fruit production, refer to:

Fruit Production for the Home Gardener

On-line version: http://agsci.psu.edu/fphg

Print copies ordered from:
Telephone: 814-865-6713
Fax: 814-863-5560
E-mail: AgPubsDist@psu.edu

An Outreach program of the College of Agricultural Sciences