

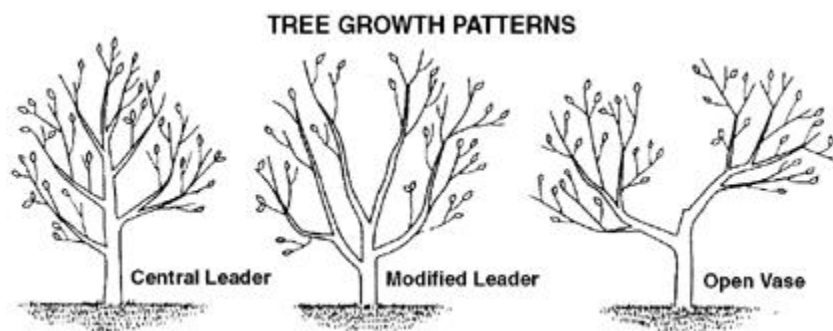
# TREE FRUIT CROP TRAINING SYSTEMS

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If dependable, annual crops of large juicy fruit are what you want from your fruit trees, then annual pruning and thinning fruit are a must. Unpruned trees often produce only occasional crops of smaller, inferior quality fruit. Pruning to develop strong, well spaced branches, which can handle heavy loads of ripe fruit, is critical.

Fruit trees are usually pruned according to one of four generally recognized forms.

**Central Leader** – Fruits like pecans and apples, which bear heavy fruit, are often trained to form a central leader. This system encourages one main trunk with strong side branches. Maintain open space between limbs and thin secondary branches to allow sunlight and air to reach the center of the tree. When completed the tree looks like a Christmas tree.



**Modified Leader** – Pears which are prone to fire blight in the south are trained in this style. Persimmon, apple, and many nut trees are also pruned in this style to make harvesting easier. Begin pruning the same way as the central leader form with one strong central trunk, but only allow 5 to 8 scaffold branches to form. This will shorten the over all height of the tree. The modified leader system may be easier to maintain since many fruit trees tend to grow this way naturally.

**Open Center** – This method opens up the center of the tree to let light and air in but can create weaker branches and is not recommended for apples and pears. It works well for peaches, nectarines and plums. Avoid several limbs growing from nearly the same point on the trunk or weak crotches will result. Space the principal limbs out over as much area of the trunk as possible.

**Multi Trunk Stool** – This method is used on fruits that tend to freeze easily like fig and pomegranate. Creating multiple trunks on a 12 to 18inch area above ground level will insure a good base for the tree to recover when occasional freezes kill the tree to the ground.

A fruit tree often sets more fruit in the spring than it can easily handle. If you want large high quality fruit then you must thin groups of young fruit to a single fruit. This should be done while the fruit is still small. Space the fruit an average of 6 inches apart. Thinning is time consuming but helps considerably if you want quality, larger fruit.

Fruit trees like fig, peach, citrus, and persimmon bear their fruit on annual shoots that grew the previous season. You'll need to more pruning to insure a good supply of new shoots each year for best fruiting. Some of the annual shoots that bore last year's fruit should be pruned off, this will thin the fruit load and save hand thinning in summer. Peach, and nectarine trees will produce more on new limbs near the top of the tree. Keep them pruned down so you can reach the fruit. See chart for which fruit trees fruit on annual wood.

Fruit trees like pears plums and some varieties of apples produce fruit on spurs. Trees that bear fruit on spurs produce fewer new limbs and can be kept in shape with less pruning. It is still a good idea to thin them regularly and remove some three year or older spurs to encourage growth or new spurs. Some fruit trees fruit on spur and annual shoots. You'll need to do renew spurs and thin out some annual shoots on those types. See chart.

Citrus, figs and pomegranates should be pruned after they break dormancy in the spring. This will insure they stay dormant until spring and if damaged in a freeze you will know where to trim them back. Olive trees can be pruned in the summer to regulate fruit loads, avoiding alternate bearing.

<b>Fruit</b>	<b>Growth</b>	<b>Training Method</b>	<b>Annual Shoots</b>	<b>Spurs</b>	<b>Productive Spur Life</b>	<b>Pruning of Mature Trees</b>
Apple	Upright, Spreading	Central or Modified Leader	Some	Some	5 Years	Moderately to Hold Size
Figs	Spreading	Multi Truck Stool	All	None		Moderately to Hold Size. Remove suckers
Nectarine and Peach	Spreading	Open Center	All	None		Very Heavy
Citrus	Upright, spreading	Modified Leader	All	None		Moderately to Hold Size
Pear	Upright	Modified Leader	Some	Most	10 - 12 Years	Moderately to Hold Size
Plum	Upright, Spreading	Open Center	Some	Some	6 - 8 Years	Moderately to Hold Size
Olives	Upright, spreading	Open Center	All	None		Heavy Thinning
Pomegranate	Upright, Spreading	Multi Truck Stool	Fruits on 2-3 year spurs	All	6-8 years	Light Thinning. Remove suckers
Persimmon	Upright, Spreading	Modified Leader	All	NONE		Moderately to Hold Size
Chestnut	Spreading	Modified Leader	All	NONE		Light
Quince	Spreading	Modified Leader	All	NONE		Moderately to Hold Size
Pecan	Upright, Spreading	Central Leader	All	NONE		Light

