



HOME & GARDEN

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Fruit Tips - December 2008

Culture

- Fruit plants can be pruned anytime during dormancy, between November and March. However, it is best to wait until late winter so that the full effects of winter weather can be assessed. This is especially true for peach trees. Fireblight damage on apples and pears should be pruned out during the coldest periods in December or January. This will lessen the chance of spreading this bacterial infection. Prune out the dead raspberry and blackberry canes that fruited this past summer. Fall fruiting raspberries can be mowed to the ground in late winter. Be sure to remove all dead and diseased plant parts from tree fruit and small fruit plantings.
- Protect fig trees from freezing temperatures with leaves, straw, or tarps. Any exposed wood is vulnerable to winter damage.
- Store pears in a refrigerator or other cool, dark location. Bring them to room temperature to ripen.
- Be sure to pick up and discard all dropped fruits and nuts as they often contain damaging insects that will continue their life cycle underneath your trees. Also remove all mummies and unharvested fruits hanging from plants, including the fruit stems. Use a mulching mower to shred and pick up leaves from fruit trees.
- Fruit trees can be sprayed after leaf drop with a dormant oil to help control scales, aphids and mites. Spray all wood thoroughly on a windless day when the temperature is expected to remain above freezing for 24 hours.
- Mulch should be applied only 2-3 inches deep around fruit plants but kept away from crowns and trunks. Deep mulch makes a favorable habitat for voles. If the mulch is pulled up close to the plants, voles will feed on and damage bark and wood.
- Consider covering your strawberry patch with a piece of floating row cover. This material can help prevent winter injury and promote early growth in the spring.

Have a pest or gardening question?
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