



HOME & GARDEN

Home and Garden information center • 12005 Homewood Road • Ellicott City, MD 21042 • 1-800-342-2507

June 2009

Fruit Tips

Culture

- The leaves of some fruit trees that bloomed and leafed out nicely in the spring may wither and drop in June. This can be due to stressors such as excessive rainfall, damaged fruit, fall drought or poorly drained soil.
- June drop of excessive fruits is a natural thinning phenomenon and is more pronounced where no hand thinning has occurred. Hand thin the fruits on plum, peach, apple and pear trees, leaving a 5-6 inch space between remaining fruits. Disease and insect problems, environmental stress, and lack of pollination or fertilization may have caused some earlier fruit drop. Pick up and throw out all dropped fruits.
- Mature fruit trees that produce no fruit may be growing in excessive shade or require a pollinizer plant. This is the case with most apples, pears, sweet cherries, and some plums.
- The first-year, non-flowering canes of bramble plants should be tip cut at 36 inches. Laterals coming off these primocanes should be tip cut at 18 inches. This will encourage heavy fruiting next year.
- Strawberries picked early in the day keep best. To prevent rot in storage, do not wash or remove stems until ready to use. Store berries in covered containers in the refrigerator.
- Remove all blossoms and fruits from newly planted strawberries and 1 – 3 year old blueberry plants so that the plant's energies are directed to root establishment. Keep your blueberry plants well-watered during dry periods. They are very susceptible to drought stress.
- Don't spray herbicides around fruit plants or rototill to control weeds. Instead use a hoe or layer of mulch.

Insects

- Oriental fruit moth larvae feed in the ends of succulent shoots of peach and plum causing them to wilt. Prune out and discard the wilted shoots. The second generation of this pest will bore into fruits.
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- Sap beetles are small, brown to black beetles that feed on over-ripe berries. No sprays can be used against these pests during harvest. Harvesting fruit before peak ripeness will help you to minimize these problems. Place shallow plastic containers of beer, molasses and yeast mixed with water in walkways between rows to attract sap beetles and slugs away from strawberries and raspberries.
- Apple maggot, codling moth, and plum curculio damage may be observed on apples, especially if no insecticide was sprayed after bloom. Cut open fruits that drop to the ground for signs of insect feeding. Discard all fallen and infested fruits.
- Wilting and dieback of bramble canes accompanied by swellings along the canes indicates cane borers. Prune out below the visible damage.
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- Peach tree borer larvae that over-wintered in the lower trunks of peach trees are actively feeding on the cambial tissue, right below the bark. You will see entrance holes with thick sap or gum at the opening. The feeding of only a few borers can girdle and kill a young tree. A vertical cut with a very sharp knife can be made around the entrance hole in an effort to locate and kill

Educating People To Help Themselves

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the borers. Inserting a sharp thin wire into the holes may also spear the borers. It is very difficult to deliver an insecticide past the gum. Borers are attracted to stressed trees so keep your trees healthy to prevent damage.

Disease

- Hot dry weather can cause white drupelet disorder in raspberries. Fruit portions exposed to intense sunlight and hot temperatures turn white and hard. Remove any bramble canes that show virus symptoms- small, curled, distorted or mottled leaves. Blackberry and black raspberry plants with leaves exhibiting dusty, orange pustules are infected with rust disease and should be dug up, bagged up and thrown out.
- Cedar-apple rust disease on apples can be severe on susceptible varieties like Yellow Delicious and Winesap. Leaves develop yellow-orange colored pustules on leaf undersides. Cedar trees are the alternate host for this disease. Remove nearby juniper trees where possible. At the least, remove the brown apple galls that hang from the junipers. These swell up in March and April into large orange spore horns which expel fungal spores that infect apple trees. Apply Immunox on apple trees at tight cluster next spring to keep the disease in check. If you plan to expand your fruit planting, select cultivars with resistance to this disease.
- Fungicide sprays for brown rot of stone fruits and black rot of grapes should be continued on a 10-14 day schedule. Infected fruit should be quickly removed and discarded.
- If your tree experienced peach leaf curl disease this spring, exhibiting puckered, purple-red leaves and some defoliation, prevent it next year by spraying trees thoroughly with liquid lime sulfur when buds begin to swell.

Have a pest or gardening question? Call the Home and Garden Information Center

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