

WINTER

Preparing your orchard for winter is time well spent. Harsh weather, rabbit and deer predation can damage trees and heavy snowfall can break branches.

Now is the time for the main pruning of apple and pear trees. Remember to clean all tool blades with methylated spirits before starting and between each tree.

- Cut out any dead, diseased or damaged branches
- Cut out branches growing into the centre - aim for an open goblet shape
- Cut out branches of apple trees growing vertically
- Check tree ties and stakes - they should be firm and supportive but not too tight
- Mulch tree bases with bark, grass clippings etc to conserve moisture
- Protect from rabbit and deer damage with tree guards



ADDING NEW TREES

As your orchard grows and you see what a wonderful resource it can be, you may want to add new varieties. Order these early in the autumn, using stock from good-quality nurseries who, where possible, do their own grafting. Prepare the ground ready for planting from November to February but avoid leaving holes to fill with water.

- Consider good spacing
- Keep roots covered until the last moment to avoid drying out
- Label your trees and make a map
- Try different styles of training trees



HOW TO...

...care for your orchard



Earlsgate House, St. Ninians Road, Stirling FK8 2HE
Tel: 01786 449215 Email: info@forthenvironmentlink.org

www.forthvalleysorchards.org.uk

Company number: 286 723 Scottish Charity: SCO 019276

SPRING

As days lengthen and temperatures begin to rise, the trees in your orchard will be showing signs of life. Buds will be swelling, and leaves beginning to open. As soon as blossom appears, pollinating insects will become supremely important - they will ensure you have a harvest of fruit. Bees and butterflies will be attracted to the blossom if you have already provided early flowers in your orchard.

- Remove heavy late snow from branches
- Keep rabbit guards on your trees
- Mulch around the trees with bark, grass clippings etc
- Create flowerbeds at the base of your trees or in small beds nearby
- Plant snowdrops and hellebores for early flowers and chives, lavender or nasturtiums for later
- Remove caterpillars from young leaves regularly
- Celebrate Blossom Day in May



SUMMER

By the end of May, blossom will have been pollinated and as summer progresses, embryonic fruits will be appearing.

Some will drop off naturally, but by July you should remove enough remaining apples and pears, to allow 10cms between each one. This will ensure you have fruits of a good size in autumn. Apple and pear trees should have long new growth pruned by about 10cms.

Now is the time to carry out the main pruning of plum and greengage trees. Clean the blades of all tools with methylated spirits to prevent the spread of disease. Water trees well in prolonged dry weather.

SUMMER PRUNING

- Cut out dead branches
- Cut out diseased branches
- Cut out damaged branches
- Cut out any growing into the centre
- Shorten the rest by a third



AUTUMN

From August, apples will begin to ripen. Some early varieties such as Discovery, East Lothian Pippin and Hood's Supreme can be harvested then. To test if an apple is ready, give it a gentle twist. For a pear, lift it up. Another indicator will be when windfalls start to lie on the ground.

Continue to harvest as fruit ripens, and if you wish to store apples, make sure that there is no bruising or damage, wrap each individually in tissue paper and place in a cool dry place. Many apples will keep for a few weeks in a fridge. Apple rings dry well, and can be the basis for a wide range of tasty recipes.

Pears should be harvested as soon as they are ready, and left for at least a week to fully ripen.

Plums and cherries are best eaten right away, or made into jams and chutneys.

Stone me!

