

Extension Notes

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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

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Simple Pruning Tips for Your Fruit Trees During the Dormant Season

All fruit trees must be pruned and trained to enhance fruit production, as the way the tree is shaped will impact fruit yield, fruit size and ripening. In Kentucky, the ideal time to prune fruit trees is in late winter or early spring.

Both newly planted and mature fruit trees must be pruned to maintain size and shape. Here are some easy tips:

- For young trees, pruning to a strong central leader with four to five lateral branches is most common.
- Heading cuts can be done on mature trees to control the tree's height; thinning cuts can open up the canopy and maximize sunlight and airflow. For older, overgrown trees that need heavier pruning, removing up to 1/3 of the larger branches over several years will help rejuvenate the tree.
- Pruning cuts should be made at the base of the branches, leaving a ¼" to ½" branch collar intact for proper healing. Dead and diseased shoots and limbs should be removed, as well as any shriveled or 'mummy' fruit remaining on the tree.
- Sharp pruners or loppers should be used to ensure clean cuts. Sanitize the tool blades between each cut with rubbing alcohol or a 10% bleach solution so as not to spread any disease that may be present.

For more information on pruning apple trees, contact the Carter County Extension Office or visit the UK Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/user/UKAgriculture) at <https://www.youtube.com/user/UKAgriculture>. [Pruning Central Leader Apple Trees \(https://bit.ly/48VR31Q\)](https://bit.ly/48VR31Q) discusses trees that are pruned to the classic pyramid or oval shape. [Pruning Tall Spindle Apple Trees \(https://bit.ly/4bh85JA\)](https://bit.ly/4bh85JA) focuses on the high-density supported training system with trees planted on dwarf rootstocks, producing a crop as little as a year after planting.

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Upcoming Events:

- **Ag Advancement Council** – Monday, February 19th @ 6:00 PM
- **From Forage to Livestock Silvopasture Webinar** – Tuesday, February 20th @ 1:00 PM
- **Woods & Wildlife for Your Wallet** – Thursday, February 22nd @ 5:30 PM – Greenup County High School
- **Strategies to Reduce Fertilizer Use on Eastern KY Cattle Farms** – Thursday, February 22nd @ 5:30 PM – Morehead State University Farm Classroom