



Pruning and Training Apple Trees 2010 OEFFA Annual Conference

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Pruning and training of apple trees are an essential part of profitable apple production. Apple tree training is performed so that apple trees maximize sunlight and nutrient usage. Some of the common training systems are Central Leader and Slender Spindle. Central Leader is the most popular training system in North America while slender spindle is newer and gaining popularity. Growers need to select training systems based on their knowledge and production practices.

Apple trees are pruned in the dormant season, i.e., February and March. Many growers also do summer pruning. A great majority of pruning is done during the dormant season. Two basic pruning cuts are heading or heading back cut, and thinning or thinning out cut. Apple trees produce fruits on spurs. The most productive spurs are on horizontal branches. Upright shoots are too vigorous while drooping branches are too weak. Keep the horizontal branches and prune off other two types. A well pruned apple tree looks quite bare to untrained people. However, this type of pruning is absolutely necessary to allow sufficient sunlight penetration into the whole tree for maximum efficiency and the greatest number of high quality fruits. The open tree will also allow better air movement and thus reduces disease problems. Pruning takes practice. But keep in mind that it is hard to over-prune an apple tree, unless it is a basal pruning cut!

Helpful References:

- Gao, G. et al. 2009. Midwest Home Fruit Production Guide. OSU Extension Bulletin 940, which can be ordered from OSU Extension offices or eStore: <http://estore.osu-extension.org/>
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