



HOW TO PRUNE



YOUR MDHA APPLE TREES

- ✓ Proper Tree Pruning
- ✓ Tree Removal and Stump Grinding



Step 1:

Start by removing all Dead, Damaged and Diseased branches.

Step 2:

Remove all water sprouts.

Do not prune in late winter until the -20 temps are over. August is the prime time to prune

Step 3:

Taking care to not remove more than 25% of branches in one year, remove the following evenly throughout the tree:

- Branches that are crossing other branches and touching each other
- Branches that extend more than halfway to the next tree- Trees should not be touching each other
- Inward growing branches
- Downward growing branches
- Upward Growing branches

Note: Branches should ideally be horizontal at 0 degrees to upward growing up to 30 degrees.

Step 4:

If more branches can still be removed while staying under 25%, consider removing more to achieve the following objectives:

- Make the tree into a vaguely conical or Christmas tree shape with the longest branches at the bottom, and the shortest near the top. This allows for good light penetration to all of the leaves and fruit
- Thin branches as needed to allow good light penetration into the canopy. To get vegetative and fruit growth inside the canopy, there needs to be sunlight. This also helps leaves dry faster which prevents fungal disease, and helps make spray more effective as it can better penetrate the canopy to reach all of the foliage.
- Remove any new branches growing outward from the stem unless training them to become new scaffold/primary branches. Leaving small branches and fruit spurs is okay.

Do not prune in May & June as diseases are plentiful during those times.

Step 5:

Prune the central leader (trunk) of the tree. If there are two forming, generally remove the smaller or least healthy or desirable looking. If the tree has reached its desired height, prune the central leader to the top most scaffold/primary branch. Annually remove any new primary branches that will attempt to become the new/pseudo central leader.

Other Pruning Notes:

- Branches may be removed back to another stem or headed back to a bud. Always prune just outward from a bud to create a new pseudo-terminal bud. A cross cut, or angled welch cut may be used.
- Sanitize pruning tools between every tree. Recommended sanitization method: Use a 1 cup vinegar to 1 gal water solution, spray on tool blades to sanitize. Vinegar may be increased up to 50%.
- If removing suspected diseased plant material, sanitize tools before making any more cuts on other parts of the tree. Additionally, sanitize tool handles, and hands/gloves if possible.
- Remove prunings as soon as possible from the orchard.

Originally compiled from Sam Behrends notes from UofM extension pruning workshop at cider flats orchard 3/13/23.