



## Fruit Tree Pruning to Reduce Bear Attractants

Ripe fruit in bear country attracts bears. To reduce the risk of a bear being attracted to ripe fruit it is best to pick all fruit as, or before, it ripens. Remember to also pick up any windfall fruit.

Very tall trees are difficult to harvest, can be dangerous, and often produce more fruit than can be readily used. Pruning your tree makes it easier to harvest, and it also reduces the amount of fruit to within manageable limits, while often improving fruit quality.

Revelstoke Bear Aware encourages good management of fruit trees to reduce bear attractants. If you are not able to prune your tree or pick the fruit, consider replacing the tree with a non-fruiting native tree, or knocking off the blossoms in spring with a hose.

If you are unable to pick or use all your fruit, contact Revelstoke Bear Aware on 250 837 8624 and have your tree harvested by the Gleaning Project, which organises volunteers to harvest excess local produce and take it to the Food Bank.

### Basic Pruning Techniques

- ❖ Fruit tree pruning for reducing the height of the tree may be done in early summer. Early summer pruning will limit the vegetative growth and cause the tree to direct more sugars into the fruit. Early summer pruning can lead to a reduction in the size of your tree, whilst retaining its ability to produce good fruit. Pruning in late winter or very early spring is often recommended but can produce more vigorous vegetative growth.
- ❖ Consider what tree shape is suitable for your garden space and your tree species.
- ❖ Tree shape depends on species but apples, pears, cherries, and stone-fruit trees all do well when pruned in the open-centre system.
- ❖ Open centre pruning of a young tree requires removing the central leader, letting the majority of the growth flow into a scaffold of radial branches, see Figure 1.

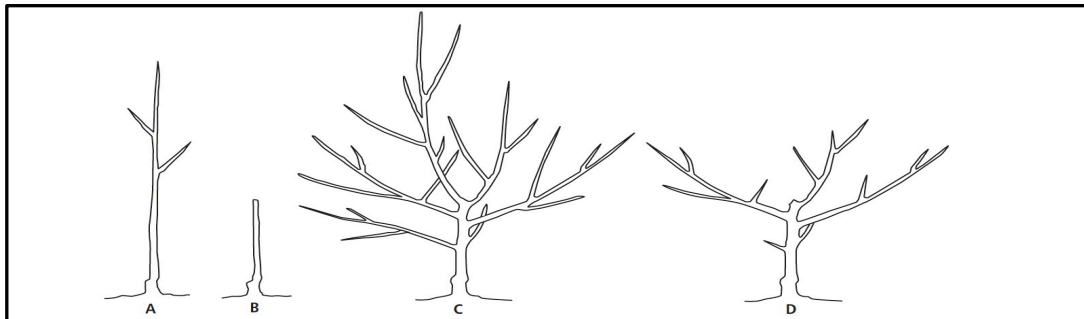


Figure 1: Open centre pruning method. (A) Tree at planting. (B) Tree headed at planting. (C) Growth after one season. (D) Tree pruned after one growing season.

- ❖ Mature trees can be reduced in height into an open centre system, but this may take several seasons to achieve.
- ❖ Never reduce tree height by more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  in any one year. Excessive pruning can lead to the production of “water shoots” which are very vigorous, upright, and produce few fruit, in addition to becoming very tall and hard to reach.
- ❖ When reducing the height of a tree, aim for an overall tree shape with an open centre, and several radial branches each with crotch angle more than  $45^\circ$  to the trunk of the tree, see Figure 2.

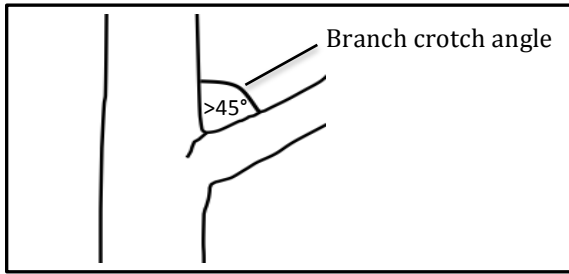


Figure 2. Choose branches with greater than 45° angle to the main trunk.

- ❖ Always use drop-crotch pruning cuts; cut back to a crotch created by a lateral branch. The remaining branch should be no less than 1/3 the size of the cut branch, see Figure 3.

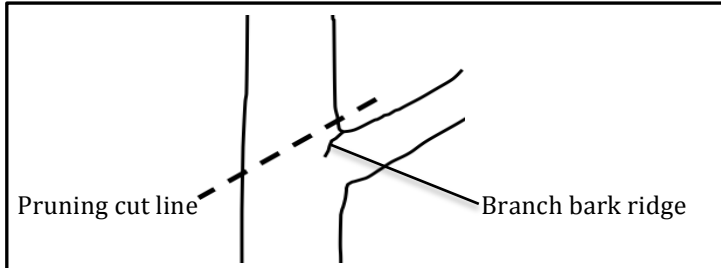


Figure 3. Drop crotch pruning cut at 45° angle above the branch bark ridge of a branch no less than one-third the size of the cut limb/trunk.

- ❖ Always make pruning cuts at a 45° angle, above a lateral bud or branch, see Figure 4.

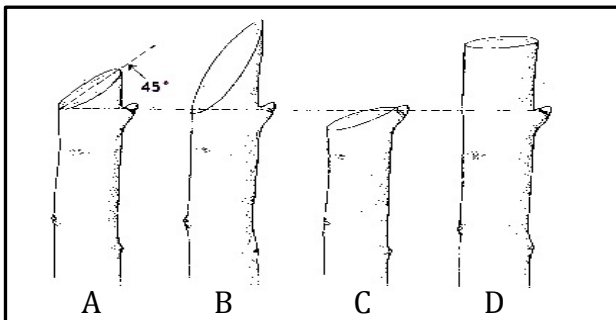


Figure 4: (A) Correct angle and placement of cutting. (B) Too angular. (C) Too low. (D) Too high.

- ❖ For larger branches ( more than 2.5cm in diameter) always make an undercut half way through the branch before cutting from above the branch and finally making a cut close to, but not damaging the branch collar, see Figure 5.

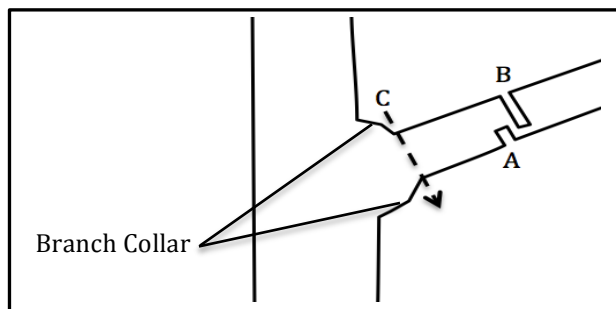


Figure 5: Correct pruning cuts for larger branches. First cut at point A, second cut at point B, and final cut at point C.

- ❖ Always use clean, sharp pruning shears or saws. It is not recommended to treat pruning wounds with any material.