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ORNAMENTAL TREE NURSERIES

PRUNING FRUIT TREES

For the first few years after planting a fruit tree you will need to prune to ensure a balanced shape. If you are training a tree against a wall or fence, or along wires, it will need constant attention.

Maidens:

Trees bought as maidens can be trained into any of the forms below:

Bush Trees;

To grow from a maiden, when planting, prune off the lower laterals up to the height you wish the lowest branches to start. In the next 2 or 3 years prune the tree to establish the correct shape, in the early spring cut each shoot of last seasons growth by half and thin out over crowded and crossing branches. Little pruning will be required in subsequent years. Prune cherries, plums and peaches in early summer to avoid canker infection, and paint pruning wounds with a copper based wound paint,

Standards;

A one year maiden tree will have a central leader, or trunk, and perhaps several side laterals growing along it. The lowest laterals should be removed when the tree is planted and the remainder cut to 10-15cm, always cut to a bud. This can be done for you at the nursery. After the 1st year the laterals on the lower half of the trunk should be removed. This should be done in early spring using sharp tools and cutting flush with the trunk. Check for, and remove, double leaders and basal shoots or suckers; and rim the head of the tree if necessary to maintain it's shape. In subsequent years remove laterals on the trunk until you have the height of clear stem you require.

Cordons and pillars;

Commonly used for apples and pears. Use M9 and Quince 'C' rootstocks respectively. Cordons can be planted at a 45° angle and tied to strained wires, or planted upright and pruned as pillars. To grow from a maiden tree cut all laterals back to 4-5cm, to a bud, when planting. For the first few years tie in the leader and reduce all laterals to three buds in late summer. Once the leader is the required height prune the new growth each year to 3cm.

Espaliers;

See our espalier training guide

Fans;

Most often used for plums, cherries and peaches, this is one of the more complicated training methods. These varieties should only be pruned in early summer to avoid bacterial canker and silverleaf disease.

Erect training wires against your wall or fence and attach bamboo canes to these in a fan shape, this will form the framework for your fan training. When growing from a maiden try to get a tree with plenty of lower laterals. When planting, select two strong low growing laterals to form the fan structure and prune away the growth above these, cut these two laterals back to approximately 30cm. Paint all the cuts with a copper based tree wound paint.

In following year train the new growth into your framework to form a fan shape. Prune outward growing branches to 3 to 4 buds. In subsequent years trim back outward growing shoots and continue to tie in the fan structure to the framework. Once the full size is reached, prune all new growth back to 4-5cm each year in early summer.

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