

1998

## Picasso Trees Need Pruning Now

Dennis Hinkamp  
*Utah State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension\\_histall](http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension_histall)

 Part of the [Horticulture Commons](#)

**Warning:** The information in this series may be obsolete. It is presented here for historical purposes only. For the most up to date information please visit [The Utah State University Cooperative Extension Office](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Hinkamp, Dennis, "Picasso Trees Need Pruning Now" (1998). *All Archived Publications*. Paper 867.  
[http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension\\_histall/867](http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension_histall/867)

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Archived USU Extension Publications at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Archived Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact [dylan.burns@usu.edu](mailto:dylan.burns@usu.edu).





## GARDEN NOTES

# PICASSO TREES NEED PRUNING NOW

*By Dennis Hinkamp*

May 1998

Spring-13

There is new snow on the ground and winter is making a comeback tour of the state. It must be time to prune.

Pruning is best done in late winter, but not required says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. Pruning can be done anytime on most fruit trees—anytime that is before about the end of May, without causing too much damage.

“Pruning at this time of year before the trees leaf out has three distinct advantages,” Goodspeed explains. “First, the problem limbs and branches are easier to see and remove. Second, it is healthier for the tree, and third, there are not many meddlesome bees.”

He says most books seem to make pruning seem harder than it really is. A few books confuse and frustrate more than they explain. They usually contain those really nice pictures of the perfect tree, but most of us have trees that more closely resemble a Picasso than a Norman Rockwell.

“There are two basic rules to follow when pruning a fruit tree,” he says. “The first rule is to simply clean up the tree. Some fruit trees such as cherry and plum may only need a good ‘cleaning’ each year and no other pruning.

“Cleaning a tree involves removing any water sprouts or suckers. Suckers grow straight up from the base of the tree or the root system. Water sprouts also grow straight up, but are located up in the structure of the tree. Some water sprouts can grow up to 10 feet in one year. They normally are very poor producers and just cause problems.”

Other wood to remove includes branches that are dead, diseased or have insect damage, he adds. Diseased branches or limbs do not drop their leaves in the fall, which makes them easy to identify. Branches that cross each other and rub should also be removed. Rubbing branches cause wounds and provide insects and diseases an opening to penetrate the tree.

“The second rule of pruning is to let in the light,” Goodspeed says. “This is essential for optimum fruit production. Generally the best fruit is produced close to the trunk—not out on the ends of the branches. The trick to pruning is maximizing the fruiting wood, while still allowing light to penetrate into the center of the tree.”

Imagine yourself as a snowflake falling, he suggests. See if you can reach the very center of the tree without hitting any branches. Now imagine that there are leaves on the branches and try again to reach the center. Any part that is thick, making it difficult for a snowflake to penetrate, would probably also filter or block the light trying to get to the center of the tree.

“One more thing to remember is that pruning is an art form,” Goodspeed says. “These are my basic rules, but everyone prunes a little differently. The best teacher is experience and fortunately most trees won't die if they are pruned incorrectly. They may not look pretty for a year or two, but like a bad haircut, they will grow out again and recover.”

---

For more information, contact your local [USU County Extension office](#).

---

Utah State University Extension is an affirmative action/equal employment opportunity employer and educational organization. We offer our program to persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 9 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Robert L. Gilliland, Vice-President and Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Utah State University, Logan, Utah. (EP/05-1998/DF)