



Seasonal management tasks for orchards



Spring

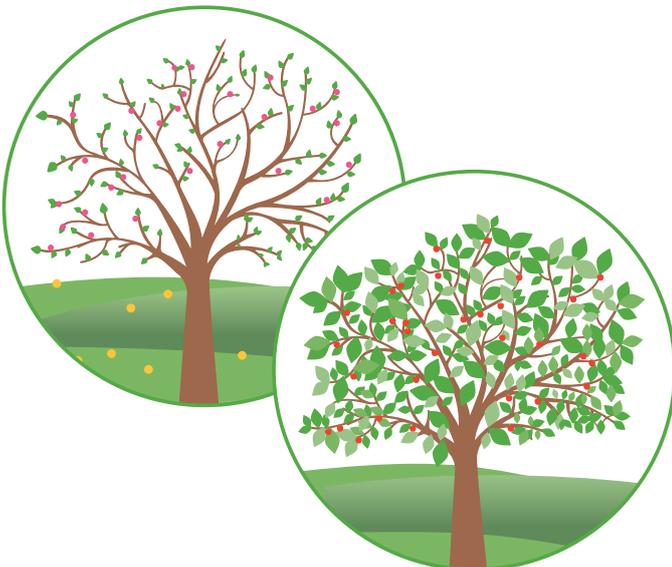
The trees will wake from their dormant period and buds will grow and open.

Feeding

After the first year of growth it's a good idea to increase the amount of nutrients in the soil, in preparation for root expansion and the first year of fruiting. This can be achieved by adding nutritionally rich organic matter, such as compost, to the mulch.

Mulching

Top up the mulch ring around each tree to limit weed growth and retain moisture in the soil. As the temperature rises it's important to maintain the water content of the soil.



Summer

Apple trees will begin to grow fruit, while plum and cherry trees can provide a harvest in July.

Watering

Fruit trees need a lot of water to grow and it's very important they are watered in the summer to prevent the soil drying out. Ideally a heavy watering once a week is required, however the amount of water will depend on recent rainfall, the soil type and structure.

Thinning the fruit

Blossom will now be swelling into fruit and it is important to thin the fruit to optimise the health and growth of the remaining fruit. Thin the fruit by removing any that show signs of damage or disease. Bunches of fruit should be thinned to no more than a couple of apples or pears. This ensures the weight of fruit doesn't damage the branches.

Harvesting stone fruit

In July, plums and cherries will be ready to harvest, eat and enjoy.

Pruning stone fruit trees

After harvesting the fruit, stone fruit trees such as plums and cherries should be pruned. Summer pruning of these trees is vital to minimise the risk of silverleaf disease. Remove any dead or diseased material and any branches that cross each other to avoid a dense canopy in the centre of the tree.

Pruning to reduce growth

Apple and pear trees can be pruned during the summer months. This can help to reduce the growth of the trees in order to maintain a manageable size within the orchard.



Autumn

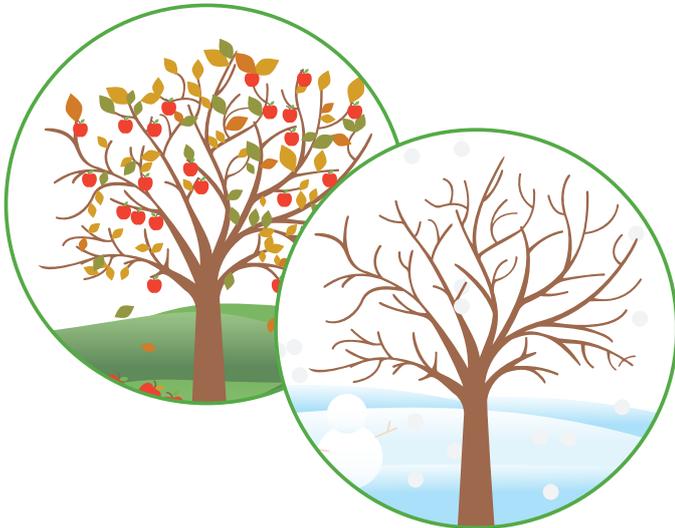
It's time to reap the rewards of your orchard and enjoy the home-grown fruits of your labour.

Harvesting

Apples and pears are ready to be harvested in the autumn.

Remove fallen fruits

To avoid the spread of disease its best to remove any fallen fruit and dispose of them, ideally in a compost container.



Winter

In the winter, fruit trees will enter a dormant phase, losing their leaves and fruit.

Pruning

It's best to prune apple and pear trees in the winter while the trees are dormant. Very little activity is occurring and the trees have lost their leaves. The bare tree makes it easier to see which branches are damaged and need removing as well as being able to see the overall shape of the tree.

Weeding

While plants are dormant it's a good time to remove any weeds surrounding your trees. By removing the weeds now, you reduce the competition for nutrients and water required by the plants in the spring.

Grafting

A grafted fruit tree is made up of two parts of different trees joined together to ensure the desired variety of fruit can be grown. Rootstocks make up the base of grafted trees, they provide the root portion, while a scion consists of the fruiting section of the tree.

Whip grafting can be done in late winter or early spring whereas bud grafting is most successful in the summer. See our **Information note – Rootstock and grafting** for more information.

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