



woodbridge fruit trees.

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Step-over Apples.

This year, 2008, we've grown our first step-over apple trees. They have been snapped up so quickly that we couldn't even list them in our catalogue. We hope to have more available for 2009.

What are step-overs? It's not a very gracious name for an extremely dwarf apple plant that is grown typically as a fruitful hedge or border to an ornamental vegetable garden, a potager garden. Their success is totally dependant on growing them on an extremely dwarfing rootstock (M27 and M9). If this tree is left to grow to it's full size it may reach to your chest or even shoulder, however it was never intended to be grown as a "tree" but rather as a small espalier or cordon. I've written a comprehensive article about espaliers - the KNNN method which can be found on our website (www.woodbridgefruittrees.com.au). Well, these step-overs are simply the K (knee) or bottom wire of the usual 4 wire system. These baby trees are extremely precocious; so much that if well grown you'll get fruit by the second year. They have a tendency to be so precocious in fact so as to turn all the growth into fruiting spurs and virtually stop growing, so in turn you have to treat them very well - plenty of mulch, no skimping with summer watering. Its even a good idea to grow lettuces, beetroot, parsley or other low growing and quick maturing veggies between them. The high fertility and moisture requirement of the vegetables helps the apples grow. They are extremely ornamental when fruiting and also in winter, bare of leaves.

The trees we sell are single whips i.e. one straight rod one year old and about 1m tall.

The method: as in espalier (KNNN) grown trees, there is absolutely minimal pruning. Each tree is planted at an angle of 45 degrees - 1 to 1.5 metres apart on one wire stretched at knee height (step-over height).



fig 1. First year

In ensuing years the only pruning (in late January - February) is removing the upward growing annual growth. The growing tip is tied down onto the wire.

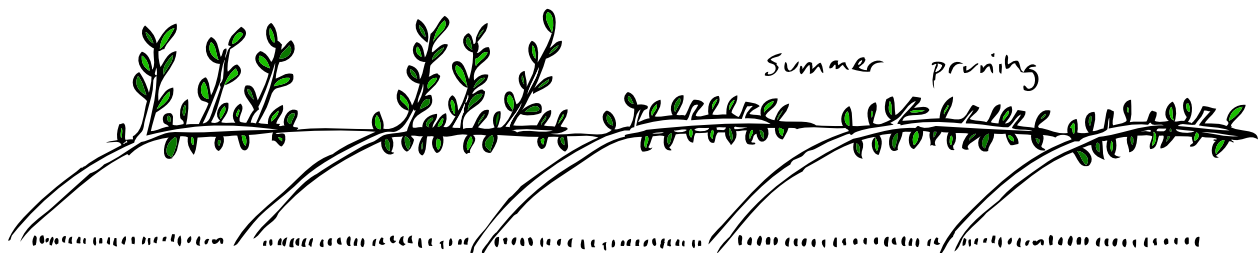


fig 2. Second year

The upright stubs quickly convert into fruiting spurs and the tips finally overgrow the next tree and it becomes a dense fruiting hedge.

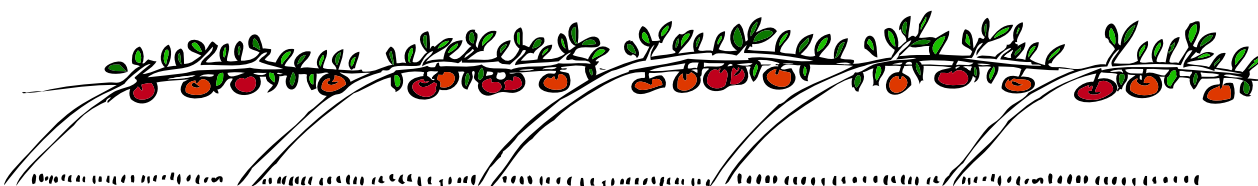


fig 3. Subsequent years

At present we're growing later maturing varieties and fruit that is highly coloured for ornamental effect - they hang on longer well into Autumn. The fruit grow to normal size and flavour.