

# Summer Pruning.

woodbridge fruit trees.

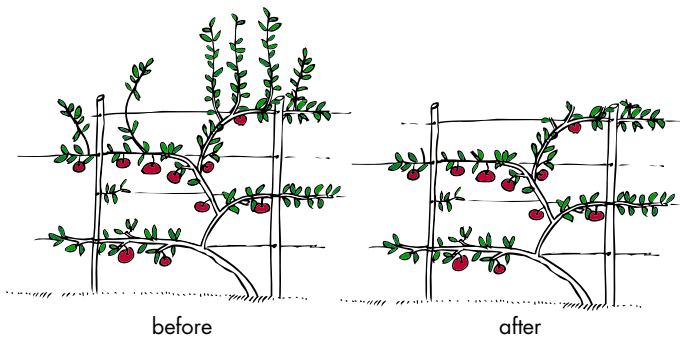
[www.woodbridgefruittrees.com.au](http://www.woodbridgefruittrees.com.au)

woodbridgefruittrees@gmail.com

PO BOX 95, Woodbridge, TAS 7162.



If nobody has any idea about cross pollination and the sexual habits of our fruit trees, just about everyone has an opinion - even people who've never got their hands dirty - about how to prune them. Now pruning is the process whereby we shape and train a young tree and prepare it for a life of producing fruit for us. Pruning is also for regulating growth and crops on mature trees and to rejuvenate old or neglected / abandoned ones. Maybe, as it's a field so broad and complex, it's why everyone has had an opinion. When I ask someone why they prune, often the response is, "well, it's winter - that's the time you prune your trees isn't it?" The huge old apple trees you see growing around farm houses in Switzerland with a trunk 2m tall are pruned and trained totally differently to those in a French cider orchard or an intently planted spindle bush orchard of "Pink Lady" trees planted only 1 meter apart.



before and after pruning

They type of trees we grow and sell here at Woodbridge Fruit Trees are contrary to what most people expect - they should be pruned in summer. These are apples, pears and cherries grafted onto dwarfing rootstocks that keep the trees to a small size, making them concentrate their energies into fruit production rather than leaf and branch. If treated correctly, they're extraordinary prolific and you can produce lots and lots of fruit in a small area. Apple, pears and cherries flower in spring, around October and after having flowered put out their annual growth of leaves and shoots. As we are growing them in restricted forms like espaliers, the trees react by growing vertical shoots and branches - they're in effect trying to become trees again. These shoots, depending on the vigour of the tree can grow up to 1m in a season - summer pruning, in essence, is cutting these shoots back to a stub of about 2-3 buds. This prevents them from spoiling the trained shape of the espalier and likewise stops them putting their efforts into more branches and leaves, encouraging a fruiting cycle. It also checks root growth, keeps the trees more compact and encourages more flower buds to develop and lets light in onto developing fruit.

If this pruning is done at the correct time, the trees won't react and start to grow again. This occurs at about the end of January. As these upright shoots / branches are removed the outermost shoots (usually the weakest) is tied down to the wire, using tying willow extending the width of the tree. This is also the time to thin the crop to about 50% of the fruit hanging - if you can bear to, that is! Of course the amount depends on how heavy the crop is: if it's light, don't bother. If really heavy you may remove 60% or even 70% of the crop. It pays, as instead of say 100 small fruits you'll get 50 big juicy ones and just the same weight of fruit. This thinning is also a form of summer pruning.

So. Please refer to our espalier and KNNN espalier articles on training methods and once you've got your young trees trained and you use the summer pruning methods explained here, you'll really get satisfaction out of your little orchard.

**Bob Magnus**