



One Planet Matters

Caring for your Orchard

Fruit trees are generally good at growing with minimal intervention, however there are a few things to keep in mind to ensure that your orchard is set up to thrive, and it's always good to know what to look for if there are any issues with your fruit trees down the line. Here are some tips for keeping your orchard nice and healthy so that it can benefit you, your community and your local wildlife for years to come...

Check your trees regularly

If you keep an eye on your trees, you are more likely to catch any issues as they arise, which will make them easier to deal with. Check your trees' branches, bark, leaves, and developing fruit for any signs of disease or pests, and if something doesn't look right, take some pictures and get in touch with us! The RHS also has a brilliant webpage which looks at the most common pests and diseases that affect fruit trees. It's a brilliant resource for understanding what is harming your tree and learning how to fix the problem.

New shoots -

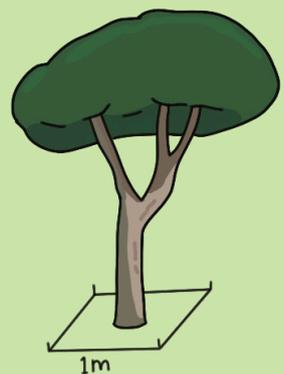
In the Spring, healthy fruit trees - especially young ones - will start showing strong, healthy new growth. Fruit trees balance their energy between growing new wood and growing new fruits. They need to produce new wood so that new buds are continually forming to hold fruit in coming years, and monitoring the length of new shoots is a great way to take note of the health of your trees. If you see plenty of young shoots, which can range between a few centimetres to a metre long, then you can rest assured that your tree is in a generally healthy condition. Remember, shoot growth can vary between different kinds of fruit trees, and depending on their age.

Leaves -

During the growing season, if it's leaves are deep green then your tree is probably happy, but if they are a different colour, this means that your tree needs something.

Keep grass and weeds away

Many growing problems can be solved by making sure that grass and weeds are kept clear in the one square metre area around the trunk.



Watering tips

Water is the key ingredient for your trees to make big juicy fruits! They will need varying amounts of water throughout the year and depending on the weather, their age, and the type of soil you have. Remember it is better to water fruit trees infrequently and deeply rather than regularly and shallowly, because surface water is more likely to just evaporate on hotter days, and trees have long taproots to access water that is deeper in the soil, so by watering deeply, you encourage your tree to develop deeper, stronger roots.

Soil type - As a general rule of thumb, if you have sandy soil you should water your trees every 1-2 weeks, and if you have clay soil you should water them every 2-3 weeks.

Tree maturity - young trees need plenty of water to establish themselves in the soil. Water thoroughly immediately after planting a fruit tree so that the soil settles around the root stock, and after that you should water the tree when the top 2 inches of soil dries out. It is a good idea to water your tree deeply once or twice a week for the first two growing seasons to help it establish itself successfully. More mature trees need less water than young ones, but it is still important that they get regular deep watering either from gardeners or rainfall.



Feeding

There are three main elements which fruit trees need in order to thrive: nitrogen (N) to encourage good growth, phosphorus (P) for root growth, and potassium (K) for good flower and fruit growth. Generally, trees can find these nutrients in the soil and grow perfectly well without extra fertiliser, however if you think that your trees may be nutrient deficient - if they aren't producing healthy looking fruit, or are looking a little sad for no apparent reason - then you may want to do a soil test to see what they need.

If you do decide that your trees need some fertiliser, here are our top tips:

- **Go Organic** - inorganic fertiliser can cause environmental issues as they end up being washed into waterways as runoff, often to the detriment of aquatic life.
- **Less is more** - using too much fertiliser can cause more damage than good, causing late growth which often doesn't do well over the winter months. Make sure you stick to the specific instructions and concentrations of the fertiliser you have chosen.
- **No one-size-fits-all** - different types of fruit trees need different kinds of fertilisers, so make sure you get a reputable fertiliser that is specifically formulated for the type of fruit tree you have.
- **Timing is key** - the best time to feed your trees is in late winter or early spring, in preparation for the new growing season.
- **Have a look at the resources we have at the bottom of this info sheet for more information.**

Mulching

Mulch is a layer of material which you apply to the surface of the soil surrounding your fruit trees. Add this to your trees in late autumn to late winter (Nov-Feb), and note that newly planted fruit trees should be mulched annually for the first three or four years. Mulching locks in the moisture during warmer and drier months, offer frost protection, and prevent weeds from growing around the tree, which can otherwise lead to reduced growth due to competition. It is best laid at least 5cm thick for it to be effective, and you can use any of the following as mulch:

- Well-rotted manure
- Leafmould
- Straw
- Garden compost
- Chipped bark
- Gravel

Learn more:

General care:

[The National Gardening Association](https://garden.org/learn/articles/view/4016/) -
<https://garden.org/learn/articles/view/4016/>

[Real English Fruit](https://realenglishfruit.co.uk/how-to-look-after-fruit-trees/) -
<https://realenglishfruit.co.uk/how-to-look-after-fruit-trees/>

[The Orchard Project](https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/guides_and_advice/helping-young-trees-establish-in-summer/) -
https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/guides_and_advice/helping-young-trees-establish-in-summer/

[Orchard People](https://orchardpeople.com/how-to-prepare-fruit-trees-for-winter/) -
<https://orchardpeople.com/how-to-prepare-fruit-trees-for-winter/>

[Gardeners' World](https://www.gardenersworld.com/plants/10-tips-for-your-best-ever-fruit-harvest/) -
<https://www.gardenersworld.com/plants/10-tips-for-your-best-ever-fruit-harvest/>

Pests & diseases:

[The Orchard Project](https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/guides_and_advice/pests-and-diseases/) -
https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/guides_and_advice/pests-and-diseases/

[People's Trust for Endangered Species \(PTES\)](https://ptes.org/campaigns/traditional-orchard-project/orchard-practical-guides/fruit-tree-health/orchard-fruit-tree-diseases/) -
<https://ptes.org/campaigns/traditional-orchard-project/orchard-practical-guides/fruit-tree-health/orchard-fruit-tree-diseases/>

[GrowVeg](https://www.growveg.co.uk/guides/5-organic-ways-to-foil-fruit-tree-pests/) -
<https://www.growveg.co.uk/guides/5-organic-ways-to-foil-fruit-tree-pests/>

Pruning:

[RHS](https://www.rhs.org.uk/fruit/apples/pruning-new-trees) -
<https://www.rhs.org.uk/fruit/apples/pruning-new-trees>

[The Orchard Project](https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/guides_and_advice/pruning-apple-trees/) -
https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/guides_and_advice/pruning-apple-trees/

[Woodland Trust](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2018/02/when-to-prune-fruit-trees/) -
<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2018/02/when-to-prune-fruit-trees/>

Soil info:

[Real English Fruit](https://realenglishfruit.co.uk/soil-for-growing-fruit-trees/#soil-drainage-test) -
<https://realenglishfruit.co.uk/soil-for-growing-fruit-trees/#soil-drainage-test>

Fertilising and mulching:

[RHS](https://www.rhs.org.uk/fruit/fruit-trees/feeding-and-mulching) -
<https://www.rhs.org.uk/fruit/fruit-trees/feeding-and-mulching>

[My Garden Life](https://www.mygardenlife.com/garden-tips/5-tips-for-fertilizing-fruit-trees) -
<https://www.mygardenlife.com/garden-tips/5-tips-for-fertilizing-fruit-trees>

[The Orchard Project \(making leaf mould\)](https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/guides_and_advice/making-leaf-mould/) -
https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/guides_and_advice/making-leaf-mould/

[The Orchard Project \(importance of mulching\)](https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/guides_and_advice/the-importance-of-mulching/) -
https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/guides_and_advice/the-importance-of-mulching/