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## 2025 Fruit Pruning School Tree Fruit

**Dr. Gary Gao, Professor and Small Fruit Specialist**  
**Brad Sherman, Program Assistant**  
**Ohio State University South Centers**

**Ryan Slaughter, Extension Educator**  
**OSU Extension Ross County**

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## "Midwest Home Fruit Production Guide"



<https://extensionpubs.osu.edu/midwest-home-fruit-production-guide/>  
OSU Extension Bulletin 940:  
\$33.75

There are 269 color photos/illustrations to show gardeners how to grow those fruit plants and how to identify and manage their fruit pests and diseases. There is also a chapter on uncommon fruits, such as pawpaw and mulberry. This bulletin is an excellent reference for anyone with an interest in home fruit production. It is especially useful for home gardeners, Master Gardeners, garden centers employees, landscapers, garden designers, Extension professionals, and schoolteachers.

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## Training and Pruning Peach Trees

**Dr. Gary Gao**  
**Professor and Extension Specialist**  
**South Centers**

**Ryan Slaughter, Extension Educator**  
**OSU Extension Ross County**

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**Tree-Ripe Peaches Are Heavenly!**



USDA

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Photos Courtesy of Brian Helser, Paiges Produce, Amanda, Ohio.

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**Open Center is the most common training form for peach trees!**



Bill Shane, Michigan State University

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### Open Center Trees on a Snowy Day



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Neil Sperry's Gardens

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### Limb Breakage



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### Pruning



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### Avoid Leaving Branch Stubs



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### Pruning Equipment



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### Types of Cuts

The diagram shows two types of pruning cuts. On the left, 'heading back' shows a tree with a single trunk being cut back to a shorter height, with arrows indicating the removal of the top portion. On the right, 'thinning out' shows a tree with multiple trunks, with arrows indicating the removal of some trunks to reduce density.

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### Peach Pruning

A photograph of a young, bare root peach tree planted in a grassy field. The tree has several main branches extending outwards. In the background, there is a red barn and a line of trees under a cloudy sky.

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### Training Young Peach Trees

#### Small Bare Root Liners:

These are single-trunk "whips" that usually have no side branches and should be topped at 30 inches above ground at planting time. The shoots that will become the main scaffold branches of your tree will usually emerge on the trunk within 4 to 6 inches below the cut.

#### Pruning a New Bare Root Tree

The diagram shows a small tree with a height of 15 inches before pruning. After pruning, the height is reduced to 30 inches. The text indicates that the main scaffold branches will emerge within 4 to 6 inches below the cut.

<https://www.wilsonbrosgardens.com/how-to-prune-a-peach-or-nectarine-tree.html>

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### Training Peach Trees

#### Larger Bare Root Trees:

If the bare root tree is branched when it comes from the nursery, select three or four lateral branches growing with wide-angle crotches (greater than 45°) spaced evenly up and around the trunk. These will be your permanent main scaffold limbs. The lowest limb should be about 15 inches above the ground and the highest about 30 inches from the ground. If no desirable laterals are available, top the tree to 30 inches in height and cut out all side branches to a point where there is only one bud left on the branch. A shoot will often develop from these buds and may be suitable for main scaffold limbs.

#### Pruning a New Bare Root Tree

The diagram shows a larger tree with a height of 15 inches before pruning. After pruning, the height is reduced to 30 inches. The text indicates that the main scaffold limbs should be selected and spaced evenly up and around the trunk.

<https://www.wilsonbrosgardens.com/how-to-prune-a-peach-or-nectarine-tree.html>

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### Peach Pruning – Open Center or Vase

The image contains several diagrams and photographs. On the left, a series of diagrams shows a tree at planting, after one year, and after two years, illustrating the development of an open center or vase shape. On the right, two photographs show a peach tree in a field, one before and one after pruning, with the center stubby growth remaining.

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### Peach Pruning Open Center or Vase

The image contains several photographs. On the left, two photographs show a peach tree in a field, one before and one after pruning. On the right, two photographs show people pruning a peach tree in a field. One person is using a chainsaw to cut a branch, while another person is observing. A dog is also visible in the background.

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### Training Peach Trees

During the second dormant season, in mid-February to early March, start pruning by removing diseased, broken and low-hanging limbs. Next, to develop an open-center, vase-shaped tree, remove vigorous upright shoots that may have developed on the inside of the main scaffold branches. The tree shown in the image to the right shows what a peach tree might look like at the end of the first growing season, and what it would look like after pruning in late winter.

<https://www.wilsonbrosgardens.com/how-to-prune-a-peach-or-nectarine-tree.html>

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### Training Peach Trees

(A) Diagram of a one-year-old peach tree that has produced too many limbs to be left permanently. (B) Same tree after pruning. (C) Top view, showing that chosen limbs are spaced evenly around the tree.

University of Maryland

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### Training Peach Trees

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### Training Peach Trees

**Container-Grown:** Many container grown trees that you purchase from a nursery are 2-years old trees. If they were pruned properly by the grower these older trees will already have strong branches with wide crotch angles.

Prune back to trunk

During the first dormant season (winter) after planting, these branches should be pruned back (headed) to a point that leaves 6 or 7 buds on the branch. The height at which branched trees are headed depends on the size of the tree and the positions of good side branches. Remember, you will only be keeping 3 or 4 main scaffold branches. It's best if these are spaced evenly around the trunk. Remove any weak branches growing from the trunk and any suckers growing from the base.

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### Training Peach Trees

2ND SEASON 3RD or 4TH SEASON SUMMER PINCHING

<https://www.starkbros.com/growing-guide/how-to-grow/fruit-trees/peach-trees/pruning>

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### Reasons for Pruning Peach Trees

The main objectives of pruning are to:

- 1) Develop good structure and strong limbs that will be productive;
- 2) Control the height of the tree, allowing for easier harvest;
- 3) Maintain a new supply of limbs that are of optimal fruit-bearing age and placement;
- 4) Remove any damaged or diseased growth.

Sheriden Hansen, Tiffany Maughan and Brent Black, Utah State University

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### Pruning to Increase Crotch Angle

Bill Shane, Michigan State University

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### Reasons for Pruning

- Improve light penetration
  - Flower bud initiation
  - Fruit color
  - Pest control

- John Strang
- University of Kentucky
- Department of Horticulture

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### Reasons for Pruning

- Removal of diseased wood
  - Fruit rot control

Black rot  
Bitter rot  
White rot

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### Reasons for Pruning

- Keep the crop close to the ground

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### Reasons for Pruning

- Partially reduce crop load

- Facilitate cultural operations

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### When to Prune

- Dormant season
  - February – bloom
  - Prune old trees first
  - Young trees last
- Exceptions
  - Peaches after bloom

Young nonbearing trees are pruned and trained differently than mature, bearing trees. Pruning for both should be done in late February, after the worst of winter is over. A common practice is to prune after bud break in order to gauge winter kill and overall tree health. Pruning after bloom reduces the incidence of canker disease.

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### Peach Pruning

- Flowers are borne on last years growth
- Pencil diameter shoots are most desirable

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### Bud Classification by Content

- Stone fruit trees
  - Vegetative buds
  - Flower buds
- Apple & pear trees
  - Vegetative
  - Mixed buds
    - Flower + leaf

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### Bud Classification by Location

- Terminal buds
  - Stone fruit vegetative
  - Apple & pear
    - Vegetative or mixed
    - Some mostly mixed – Rome
    - Most terminal mixed buds are on spurs
- Lateral buds
  - Stone fruit
    - Either vegetative or flower
  - Apple & pear
    - Usually vegetative
    - Some varieties on dwarfing rootstocks have mixed lateral buds

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### Classification by Arrangement on the Stem

- Bud arrangement influences branch arrangement, tree shape and ease of management
- Lateral or Axillary buds are located above where a leaf is attached
- Apple – 1 leaf/node
- Peach – 3 leaves/node

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### Peach Pruning

FIGURE 4.6.8. Two-year old tree before (left) and after (right) the second-year dormant pruning. Select secondary scaffolds at two to three feet from the crotch. Thin out low and horizontal shoots and excessively vigorous shoots growing toward the center. Maintain scaffolds at a 45° angle, minimizing the use of severe bench cuts.

Photo courtesy Peach Growers Handbook, UGA

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### Peach Pruning

FIGURE 4.6.9. Four-year old tree before (left) and after (right) pruning in the dormant season. Fruiting wood is thinned out to reduce the crop load. Health of fruiting wood is maintained throughout the tree by adequate light penetration. Thin branches back toward scaffolds to encourage new shoot growth close to scaffolds. Light summer pruning may be useful to maintain light penetration in tree centers, maintaining health of fruiting wood throughout the tree.

Photo courtesy Peach Growers Handbook, UGA

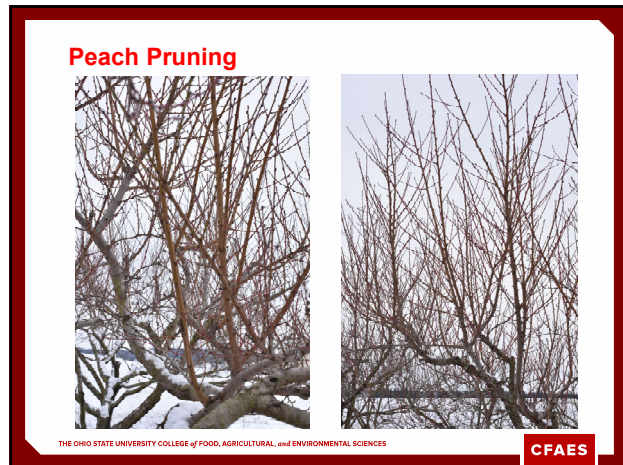
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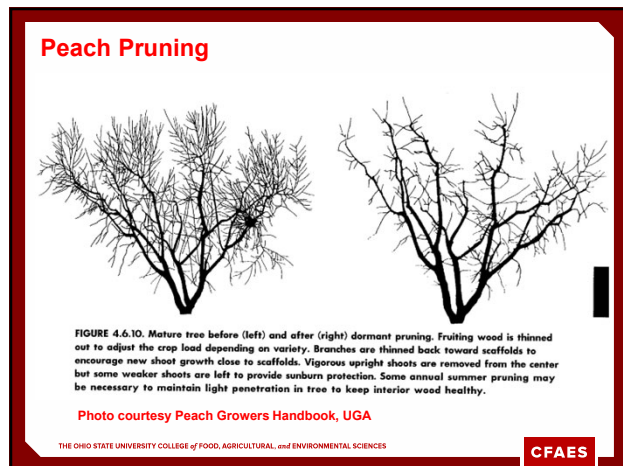
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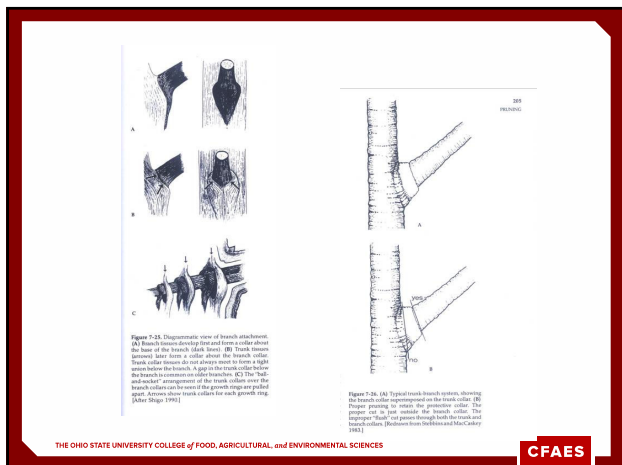
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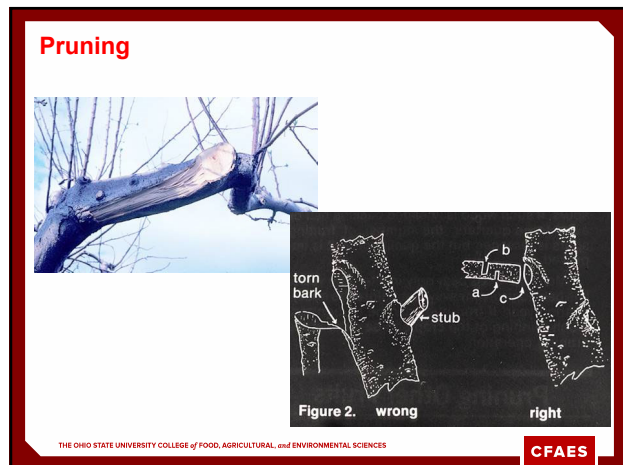
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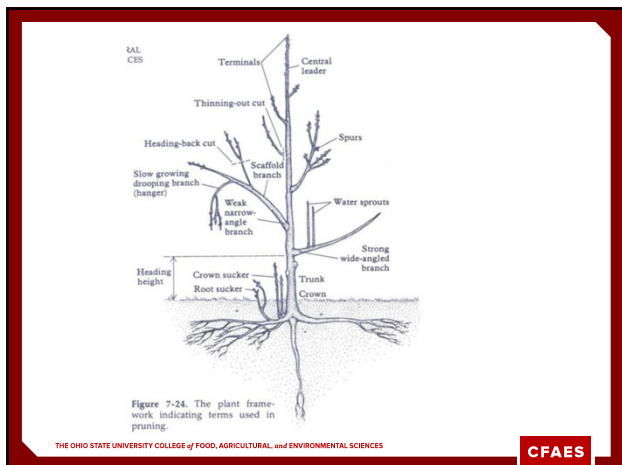
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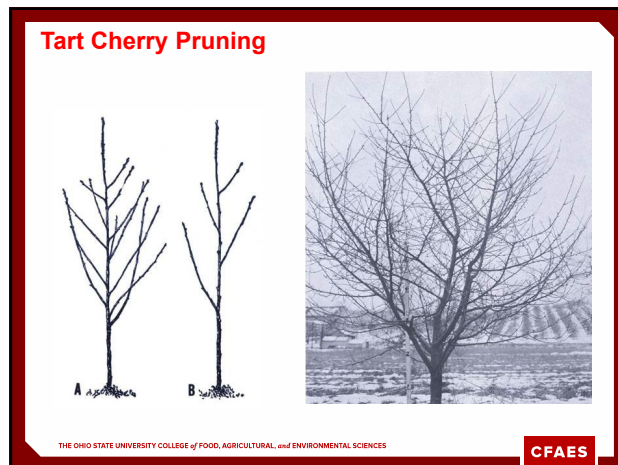
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- Summary**
- Select the right training system for each fruit type.
  - Train the trees into the right shape from the year one.
  - Remove vertical and droopy shoots.
  - Remove crossing branches.
  - Cut to an outward branch to encourage sunlight penetration.
  - Select the pencil size stems for ideal fruit wood.
  - Shorten weaker fruiting wood.
  - Reduce flower buds for more balanced yield.
  - Plant new trees after 15 years or so.
  - Enjoy the fruit of labor!
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