

August 2, 2017



Stone Fruit: From Garden to Table

by Summer Brasuel

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Do your stone fruit trees resemble something out of a Dr. Seuss adventure? Long bare branches with poms-poms out at the ends? Do they snap and break off when weighed down with fruit? Or, maybe you have little or no fruit at all! These are both signs of poor pruning techniques. All fruit trees benefit from both summer and winter pruning.

Peaches, nectarines, plums, apricots, and cherries are all members of the *Prunus* genus and are therefore closely related. They commonly are referred to as "stone fruits" because the seed is very large and hard.

Did you know that buds for next year's crop are starting to form now? Yes, they form this year, in late July-ish, not next spring. Light summer pruning involves thinning branches to allow some sunlight to reach the limbs to help form fruiting buds. Timing is everything, though. Don't prune too soon while new growth is forming as this new growth provides nutrients for the tree.

Winter pruning may involve extreme pruning, such as removing branches, cutting the size of the tree back to a manageable height, or simply shaping the tree to encourage and manage growth.

Besides pruning, stone fruit trees, especially peaches and nectarines, need to be sprayed with dormant spray to discourage diseases. One targeted disease is Peach leaf curl, which was a big problem this past spring due to the extremely wet year. Peach leaf curl does not kill the tree, but it looks awful; the leaves curl and fall off. New leaves will grow, but energy that would normally go into producing fruit is used to produce more leaves. This could affect photosynthesis and other processes that keep the tree healthy. You can read more about Peach leaf curl and other diseases and pests that affect stone fruit: <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/GARDEN/fruit.html>.

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Thinning your fruit trees is also important. It protects against broken limbs and your fruit will be larger; more fruit around that big seed!

Harvesting those luscious cherries, apricots, peaches and plums is the ultimate goal. Think about preserving your harvest. Sweet peach slices in winter, pickled cherries for your holiday cheese platter, chutneys, Asian-style plum sauce for bbq, maybe a peach salsa. Is that making you hungry?

Join Master Gardeners and Master Food Preservers on Wednesday, August 9, 2017 for the Stone Fruits: From Garden to Table class. Master Gardeners will share their knowledge about caring for stone fruit trees and the Master Food Preservers will show you how to preserve your harvest. This class is 9:00 a.m. – Noon at the Cameron Park Community Center, 2502 Country Club Drive, Cameron Park.

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news. You can also find us on [Facebook](#).

UCCE Master Food Preservers are available to answer home food preservation questions; leave a message at (530) 621-5506 or email us at edmp@ucanr.edu. For more information about our program and events, visit our website at <http://ucanr.edu/edmp>. Sign up to receive our E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpnews/>. Find us on Facebook too (UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County)!