

## WINTER FRUIT PRUNING

The fruits featured in this information sheet are all grown at The Caley Demonstration Allotment at the Bridgend Allotment site in Edinburgh.

### WHY PRUNE?

**Pruning** is done to remove dead, damaged and diseased branches from your fruit trees and bushes to allow light and air into the centre of the plant. Lack of air movement around your plants encourages the growth of fungus and increases the chance of rotting.

-----

#### ❖ TOP FRUIT (i.e. apples, pears)

These fruit trees can be grown in different shapes to suit the size of your plot. Even the smallest garden could grow 2 or 3 fruit cordons against a fence or wall.

#### **Cordon**

A cordon is a single main stem with fruiting spurs coming off. Plant at a 45° angle, sloping to the north, which will allow light along the whole of the stem, so distributing growth along the full stem and better distribution of buds. Prune the side shoots (laterals) to 3 or four buds from the base. The section left will produce the fruiting spurs. Aim for 6 apples per tree. One shoot will grow as the leader showing apical dominance. Stop the growth on the main shoot at a height that will allow easy access from the ground.

The **vegetative buds** are small and are at the top of the leader. Take the vegetative section back by about one third to about 6 inches. The **fruit buds** are fatter and grow on top of a wrinkly piece of wood.

#### **Espalier**

Quite a formal shape and requires a firm support. Must be regularly pruned or the shape will be lost. Cut off the tip of the leader. Prune old or unproductive sections of spur systems (where the fruit grows) giving space for fruit buds to form. Cut off any branches which can't be tied into the espalier shape.

#### **Bush**

Try to create a tulip shape. Treat each branch as if it were a cordon and prune the same way. Remove any crossing branches. Open out the centre of the plant.

Apples tend to be grown on specialist root stock. For small apple trees - M9 rootstock will give trees up to 1.8-3m; M27 rootstock will give trees up to 1.5-1.8m.

## ❖ **STONE FRUIT** (plums, cherries)

### **Plums**

Only prune to keep desired shape and size. The bulk of any pruning will be done in summer to help avoid the introduction of disease, but you can prune thin, small branches in winter. Fruit buds will be found young growth.

### **Cherries**

Treat like plums so prune to keep within bounds. Cover with fleece in spring to protect flowers from frost.

## ❖ **SOFT FRUIT** – split into two types: bush fruits and cane fruits.

### **BUSH FRUITS**

#### **Gooseberries**

Fruit on old wood and on the basal part of young wood. Prune back side shoots to 2 buds. (pointy fat buds are fruit buds). Gooseberries are very prickly so make space round each branch to get in to pick the fruit. Gooseberries can also be grown as cordons – this can make picking fruit a bit easier.

Create space in the middle of the bush. Cut off any branches that are too near the ground. Gooseberries (along with red and white currants) need a 6-inch leg to keep the fruit off the ground.

*Prunings as cuttings.* Each cutting should be about 8 inches in length – remove the buds from bottom 6 inches and insert in ground. When the cutting has rooted, replant about 2 inches deep in the ground. The remainder will not shoot because you have removed the buds, and this will become the leg of the bush.

#### **Red Currants / White Currants**

Related to gooseberries so take back side shoots to 2 buds. Need air in the centre and a basal leg.

*Prunings as cuttings* – take 8 inch cutting and remove buds from bottom 6 inches.

#### **Blackcurrants**

Fruit on young wood of previous year's growth so need a lot of young growth i.e. shoots from the base of the plant. Remove crossing branches and clear out the centre. Don't tip prune unless the bush is much too tall

*Prunings as cuttings* - about 8 inches long, insert 6 inches in ground. Leave the buds on the cutting – these will become shoots when it is rooted and replanted at around 2 inches deep.

#### **Blueberries**

Need a very acid soil. Fruit on 2 and 3-year-old branches, so only remove branches that are weak, crossing or close to soil, or are over 4 years old.

## **CANE FRUITS**

### **Raspberries**

**Summer fruiting raspberries.** Raspberries will produce numerous canes. To maintain a good crop, remove all old canes after fruiting. This will allow space for the new canes – keep 6 canes per clump. Tie in new canes to wire. Best grown on slight ridge.

**Autumn fruiting raspberries.** Cut down totally to ground in winter. Do not cut back after fruiting as you would for summer fruiting raspberries. If you do, new growth may appear early and be damaged by frosts

### **Loganberry, Tayberry, Bramble**

Cut down all old fruit branches to base since growth comes from ground. Allow 5 new strong canes per plant. Remove excess side shoots from new growth and shorten stems if necessary. Bundle up loose shoots and tie to post or create a framework of posts and wires and tie in shoots to keep tidy.