**Peach Tree Pruning Time and 5 Hour Crop CEU Program**

I thought I might skip this year’s fruit tree pruning article, but alas, I have been getting questions, so here we go. If you only have a few trees, it would be best to wait until pink bud to prune. If you have lots of trees to prune then you cannot wait that long and it gets to be a guessing game, but late February is usually the suggested time to start. We always try to wait as long as possible as the trees will want to bud once pruned, this will make them susceptible to frost damage or loss.

Why prune at all? Pruning helps to keep the peaches within reach for easier harvesting. Pruning will also open the center of the tree allowing air circulation and sunlight into the tree; this helps to prevent disease and accelerates fruit growth.

Here are the four steps to prune mature peach trees as recommended by Texas AgriLife Extension Horticulturist:

**Step One**
Remove all hanger shoots, rootstock suckers, and water sprouts in the lower three feet of the tree. This stripping of lower growth clears a path for herbicide applications and allows air circulation.

**Step Two**
Remove all shoots above 7 feet other than red 18- to 24-inch fruiting shoots. Cuts need to be at selected points where the scaffold and sub-scaffold limbs extend upward at a 45- to 50-degree angle. Cuts which leave limbs sideways at a 90-degree angle should be avoided.

**Step Three**
Remove all shoots which grow toward the inside of the tree.

**Step Four**
Remove all old, gray wood in the 3- to 7-foot fruit production zone. Be sure to leave all the one-year-old, 18-to-24-inch red bearing shoots; these will be about the diameter of a pencil. If these shoots are over 24 inches, cut off about 1/3 of this fruiting branch.

Amazingly, proper peach tree pruning will normally remove about 40 percent of the tree each winter. This seems like a lot, but it is necessary to reduce the number of fruit on the tree and it will stimulate strong canopy growth. This new growth will be next year’s fruiting wood.

Before trees’ leaf out is also a good time to spray any grassy or broadleaf weeds that might be growing around your trees. Hand hoeing also works, but if you have very many trees that is probably impractical.

The most efficient floor management system for most orchards consists of a mowed, native sod middle with a weed-free strip under the trees. Weeds in the strip are controlled chemically. Gradually widen the weed free strip from 3 to 4 feet in the first-year orchard to 10 to 12 feet in a mature orchard. Chemical weed control manages weeds more effectively for longer periods and at reduced cost when properly used. Chemicals used in weed control can damage trees if used improperly. Read and carefully follow all label instructions when applying herbicides.

**Crop and Auxin 5 Hour CEU Program**

This year’s Crop CEU Program is packed with excellent information and lots of CEU’s. The program will be held Friday, February 16th at the DeLeon City Auditorium. Registration will begin at 8:30 AM and the program will run from 9:00 AM until 3:00 PM. We will be offering 5 total CEU’s, 3 L&R’s and 2 IPM’s. We will also be providing Auxin Training for those that might need it. There is a $50.00 fee and lunch will be provided.

**Here is the line-up for this program:**

“Auxin Training”- Dr. Scott Nolte

“Crop Scouting Fundamentals for Corn and Cotton”- IPM agent Tyler Mays

“New Technologies for Weed and Pest Control in Sorghum”- Dr. Ronnie Schnell

“Organic Peanut and Cotton Opportunities and Requirements”- Bob Whitney

 “TDA Laws and Regulations”- Jason Jones

 Once again, the cost is $50.00 and please call the office to pre-register at (325)-356-2539.