

Thinning Excess Fruit

With any luck, you're going to have a good fruit crop this year! It might be hard to believe, but fruit trees can actually have enough fruit in some cases that thinning might be required. Why?

For starters, heavy fruit crops can interfere with fruit bud development that will occur this summer that can result in reductions in the crop next year (most often in apples). Thinning helps ensure that good crops are produced each year.

A second benefit of thinning is to promote larger fruit on the current year's crop. Fruit trees can only produce so many fruit. Too many fruit equals a reduction in fruit size and quality.

Limb damage is also an issue. The weight of a maturing fruit crop can break branches that some thinning might help preserve.

Thinning recommendations vary with the type of tree. Apples and pears should be thinned to four to six inches apart, while peaches should be spaced six to eight inches apart. Apricot spacing is two to four inches and plums/prunes should be spaced four to five inches apart. Cherries do not need to be thinned. Shoot for an average of these spacings to help with fruit size and tree health!