

# Apple Tree Pruning Procedures



## To prune efficiently follow these steps:

- Cut off water sprouts growing on the trunk and scaffold limbs. Occasionally, a water sprout may be left to fill in an open area. Water sprouts are also used for scion wood if you are into grafting.
- Remove broken and diseased branches.
- Remove the weakest of crossing or closely growing parallel limbs.
- Remove all branches that are creating narrow angle crotches, or bend to 60 degree angle on a young tree with flexible branches.
- Remove all limbs or spurs growing downwards.
- If the tree needs more branch thinning, remove weak, spindly branches first. Remove dense or long growth from the upper portions of the tree which shade lower limbs. Limbs growing within arm's reach are easier to harvest and spray.

## Remember these tips when pruning:

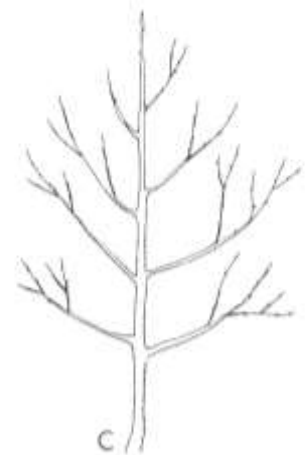
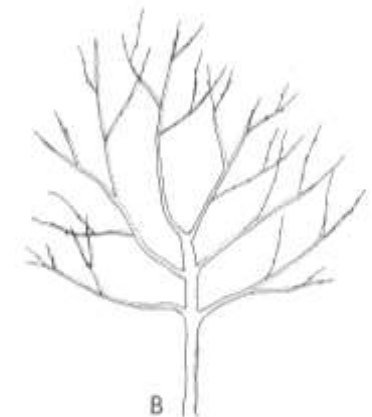
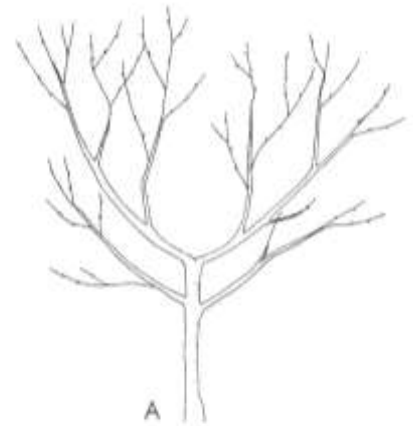
- Light is required for quality fruit.
- Prune during the dormant period, late winter or early spring. March and early April work well.
- Use tools made specifically for pruning and keep them sharp and clean.
- Make all cuts smooth and close. Leave the collar but not a stub (except for branch renewal).
- On cultivars that bear heaviest on alternate years, do heavy pruning the spring just before the bearing season.
- Over the years, develop two (to three) tiers of strong scaffold limbs - 3 to 4 per tier. The lowest tier should be at least three feet off the ground. Don't let the upper branches grow longer than the lower branches, but avoid "shearing" or short heading cuts.

## Good references:

Growing Apples in Wisconsin UWEX A3565

Pruning Apple Trees UWEX 1959

## Prune to achieve one of these structures:



(A) Open-center- or vase-trained.  
(B) Modified-leader-trained.  
(C) Central-leader-trained.