

FRUIT TREES IN WINTER

Dependent where you are in New Zealand, will likely depend on whether your deciduous fruit trees have lost their leaves yet.

You may also find that some have done so, where others are still fairly much in leaf.

Cold weather and frosts turn the leaves and in warm climates they may not turn.

Which means the trees do not have their winter rest and more often than not the following crop is less than what it could have been.

I am told that further north of NZ, where the temperatures are always warm, that apple trees will grow and become evergreens, but the size of the fruit is usually small.

We can force our deciduous fruit trees to rest by sprays of Lime Sulphur which burns off the foliage and helps destroy pests and diseases harbouring over.

But to save time and money it is better to do some pruning first.

I always like to look at what happens in Nature without man's interference and in the case of pruning we have the following natural occurrences; Wind breaking branches; the weight of fruit or animals breaking branches and branches that are eaten.

Overtime the tree adjusts to these aspects and produces stronger limbs that do not break so easily.

I am of the view that the least amount of pruning you do the better and any pruning done should be to tidy up and keep the tree in your control for ease of maintenance.

In other words remove any dead or diseased wood and keep the tree open.

If cutting a branch remember that any part of that branch that is left will produce many more branches. When a branch removed completely from its source it will never produce any more branches.

If we start off with a new fruit tree that is a rod (meaning a grafted vertical limb with little or no side branches) we cut a few cm off the top when planting.

This will cause a number of branches to appear up the vertical shaft.

If you wanted to espalier your new tree you would select two or three branches coming out of the rod on each side and tie them to horizontal wires to train them along the wires.

These main branches will later produce smaller branches which will provide your fruit once they mature. All other branches would be removed from their origin.

With your established deciduous fruit trees it is simply a matter of removing dead wood, diseased wood and branches back to their source to keep the tree open and easy to maintain.

Your bare trees will have their leaf and fruiting spurs in place and if you remove all of these then you will have no crop which is a good reason not to remove mature branches.

Gardeners that inherit an old fruit tree and give it a real hard pruning, will often find it takes two or three seasons for fruiting to start happening again.

New growth from the season will not bear fruit this year and they can be cut back to origin if not required.

Dependent on a few factors it is better to have a few branches producing good sized fruit than many branches producing lots of smaller fruit. This applies to evergreens as well.

A word of warning never do any pruning in winter when its cold and damp as that is when silver leaf disease is around waiting to enter the fresh cuts. Wait for a sunny day when ground is drier.

After doing whatever pruning is required you can spray the deciduous trees with Lime Sulphur but NOT apricots and pears (some pears can be Sulphur sensitive also) All, other pip and stone fruit are ok to use the Lime Sulphur on which helps clean up diseases and pest as well as forcing the trees to become dormant for a rest.

Spraying the soil underneath is a good practice also and you can on a separate occasion spray the trees with a solution of Potassium permanganate which now includes the apricots and pears.

Drench the soil in the root zone with potassium permanganate. Its an oxidizing agent that will help kill disease spores in the soil under your fruit trees. It is these spores that rise up in spring to cause curly leaf , black spot and other diseases.

After that sprinkle Wally's Neem Tree granules under your trees to help with soil conditioning, reduction of insect pests and food for the tree. Also apply any of the following; Blood & Bone, animal manure, chicken manure, and sheep manure pellets scattered under your trees then covered with a layer of purchased compost.

If you have your fruit trees in containers as I do, then the same can be done.

Citrus trees at this time of the year will likely have crops on them and in cold frosty conditions the fruit may start to colour up because of the cold even though they are not mature and ready to harvest.

So dont pick until you are sure they are mature and ripe.

You can sprinkle Wally's Neem Tree Granules under the tree from the trunk to the drip line and also sprinkle Fruit and Flower Power in the same area.

This will harden up the tree against the cold, increase the juice in the fruit, prevent the leaves from turning yellow or if turning, help restore them to green, control any borer or pests in the tree or in the root zone. As citrus don't like wet feet and wet times in winter can cause great harm to their

roots you can spray the trees with Perkfection to help prevent root rots and aid recovery.

It is a good idea to add Wally's Liquid Copper to the spray with Raingard to control any diseases in the tree. Finally a spray of Vaporgard will help protect the tree from frost and cold damage.

This is especially important for limes and younger trees; you certainly don't want to lose them.

I did all my citrus that are growing in containers recently and now their leavers look great, a nice dark green colour and shining as the chlorophyll works to maximum providing not only the frost protection but also gathering more energy from the sunlight to enhance your crop.

Citrus trees that are growing in lawn areas can be difficult to treat with Wally's Neem Tree Granules because of mowing the lawn. As lawns do not need so much mowing in winter now is an ideal time to treat them.

Mow your lawn first and then apply the granules under the tree from the trunk to the drip line they should over the following 6 weeks or so help control any pests in the soil and in the tree.

After that you can mow again.

Even though its winter there is still plenty to do and on those sunny days it can be a good time to get a few things done and at the same time get some sun for your Vitamin D requirements.