

# bounty

an orchardist's illustrated guide to  
a fruitful harvest



# bounty

an orchardist's illustrated guide to  
a fruitful harvest

**Written by Benjamin Howard and Maria Smilde**

**Illustrated by Maria Smilde**

**Designed by Autumn List**

Dear orchardist, current or prospective:

Over at the Baltimore Orchard Project, we aspire to see orchards of all sizes and types crop up around the city of Baltimore. We recognize that we must rely on people like you to be the cultivators and stewards of these places, and we hope to provide as much support as we can to you in this fruitful endeavor.

The sheer volume of information available on the responsibilities and maintenance involved in orchard care is overwhelming and even conflicting at times. This guide is not meant to be the unexpurgated manual to orcharding, but rather, a collection of our best advice and the essential practices for healthy trees and a bountiful harvest.

Not only have we sifted through the material, but we have organized it and presented it in a manner that you will hopefully find engaging: a month-by-month illustrated guide to fruit care. Our goal with this guide is to encourage, inspire, and involve people like you in a movement towards becoming an edible Baltimore.

Best wishes to you.

# Contents

<b>01</b>	January
<b>02</b>	February
<b>05</b>	March
<b>07</b>	April
<b>09</b>	May
<b>11</b>	June
<b>14</b>	July
<b>16</b>	August
<b>17</b>	September
<b>18</b>	October
<b>19</b>	November
<b>20</b>	December

# January

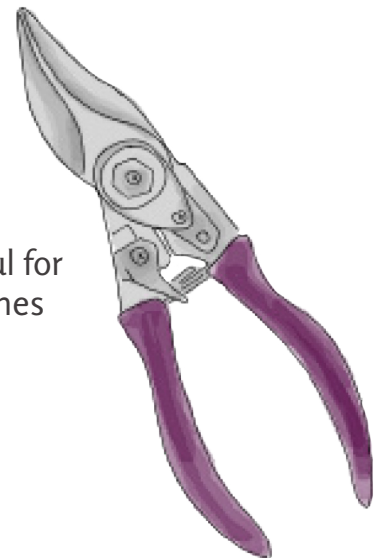
Winter pruning season is just around the corner, so now is a good time to do some prep work.

- ① Order Organic orchard supplies for the coming season! (I.e. seaweed extract, fish emulsion, neem oil, etc...)

- ② Sharpen orchard pruning equipment, sterilize with alcohol, oil mechanism if relevant



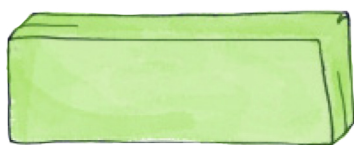
**Pruning Loppers** have a long reach and are useful for cutting medium sized branches



**Hand Shears** are useful for cutting smaller branches



**Pruning Saws** are necessary for cutting much larger branches.



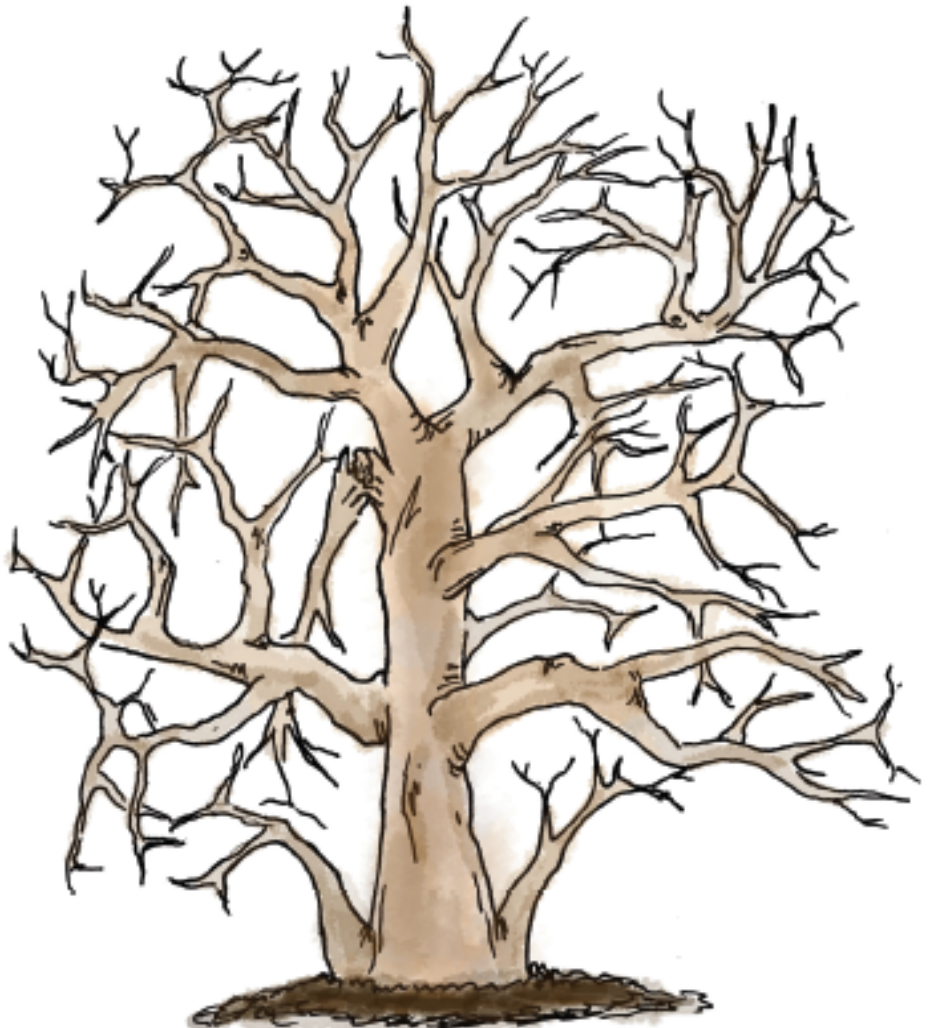
Use a **sharpening stone**, not a **file**, to sharpen your tools. Keeping your tools sharp will make pruning easier in addition to making cleaner cuts to allow the tree to heal faster.

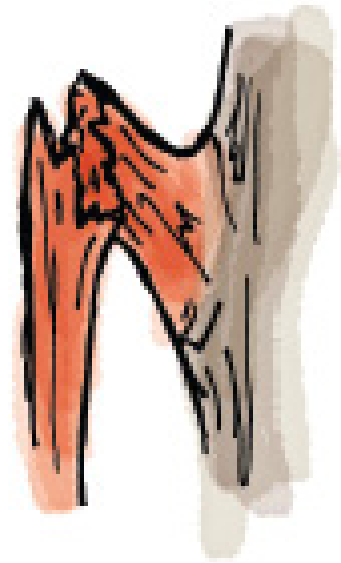
# February

- ① Prune Pome fruits (apples, pears) to 'Central Leader' shape so to define healthy lateral branches; remove vertical suckers & branches which are growing inward or crossways

- ② (late Feb/early March) Prune Stone Fruits (Peaches, Apricots, Plums etc) to 'vase shape' to allow for a maximum penetration of sunlight and drying breezes

Pruning may seem like an overwhelming task—but it doesn't have to be. Here's what you need to know to keep your trees healthy and fruitful.





When pruning, prioritize removing branches that are growing from the ground or bottom of the trunk, as well as any broken branches.



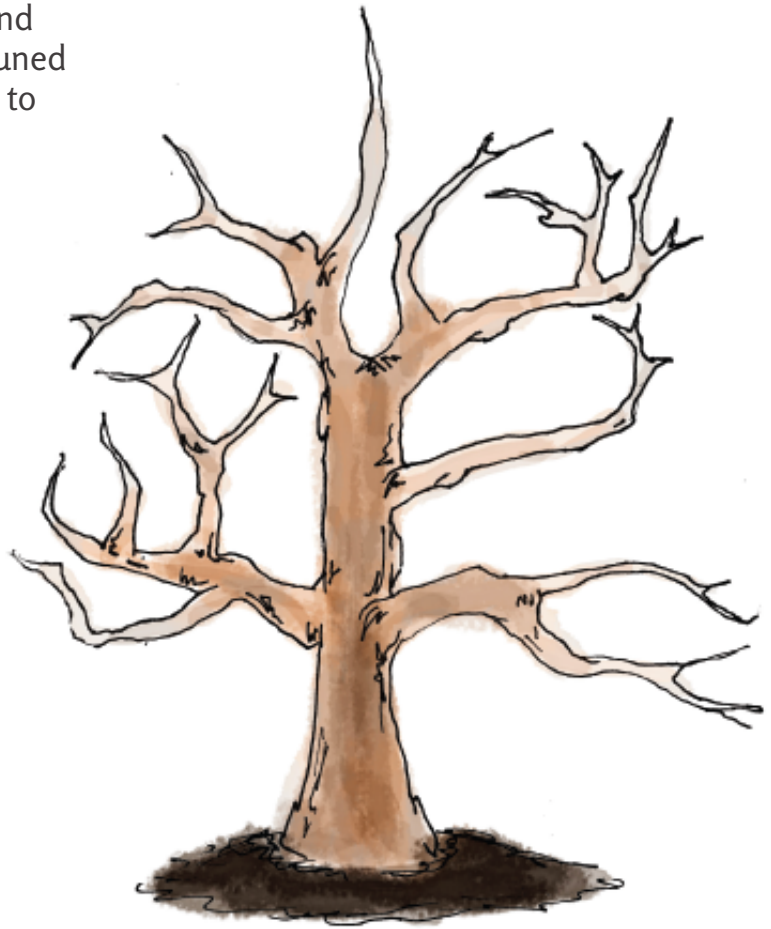
Aim to remove no more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a tree's branches in a year



Cut the branch at the branch collar, the area where the bark changes directions, for faster and better healing.

## Good pruning allows for even distribution of sunlight and airflow throughout the tree.

This is the main principle to keep in mind while pruning. If a tree has not been pruned in a while, it may take a few years to get to the ideal condition.



③ Collect scionwood for grafting projects...Wrap with a slightly moist paper towel and place inside a ziplock bag in the fridge.

④ Plant Bareroot dormant trees

⑤ Apply dormant season spray: horticulture oil, copper fungicide

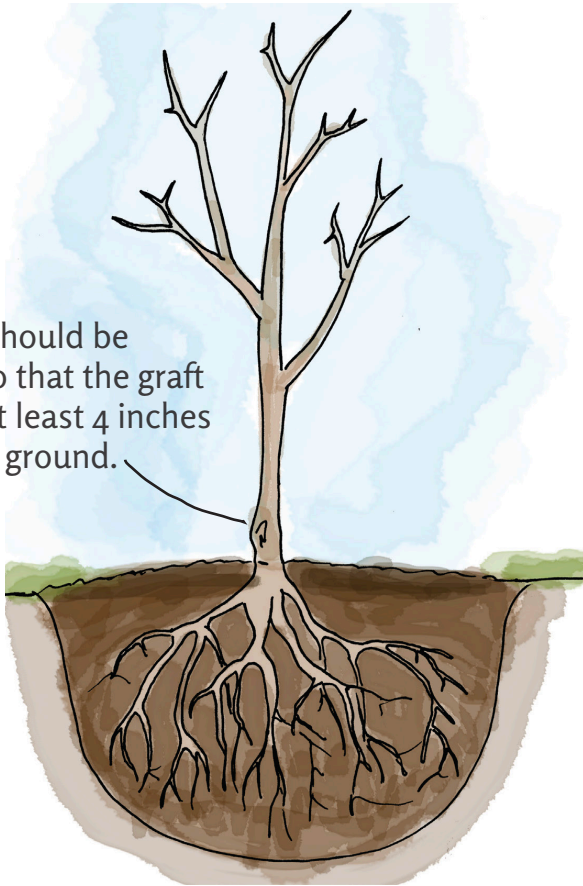


# March

① Spread lateral tree limbs to an optimum crotch angle of 45-60 degrees using forked spreaders or weights which pull branches downward.

② Plant Bare-root and other trees!

The tree should be planted so that the graft union is at least 4 inches above the ground.



When planting your trees, be sure to spread out the roots as much as possible.



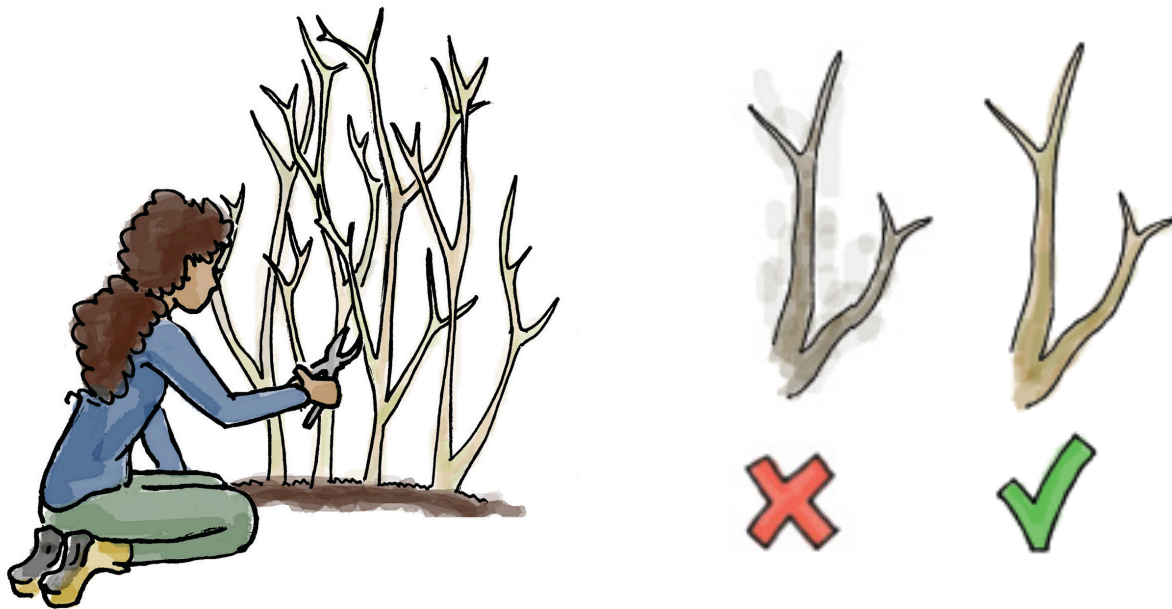
Don't forget to water them!

③ Apply dormant season spray: horticultural oil, copper fungicide.

④ Spread compost around the drip line of trees. Make sure to leave several inches between the compost and the base of the trunk.

⑤ Lay deciduous wood chip mulch around the base of trees to combat weed pressure and hold moisture in the underlying soil.

⑥ For optimal berry production, be sure to prune your berry canes before the weather gets too warm.



Remove canes that have grey or peeling bark, and any old fruiting branches. Keep canes with bark that is still alive.

# April

- 1 Prune berry brambles, Gooseberries, and Currants—cut off thick, graying or lignified (old and woody) canes to ensure maximum fruit production on younger canes.

- 2 Fertilize with compost and lay mulch.

Spreading compost around your plants adds nutrients to the soil. These nutrients can make their way to your fruit which makes them healthier, tastier, and more resistant to disease.

If the mulch layer is still in tact, rake it back before laying down compost, and then restore mulch on top of the compost.



**Chesapeake Compost Works** is one of the few composting companies in Maryland that composts with food scraps, which make the compost extra nutrient dense.



Spread the mulch around the base of the tree no more than an inch thick. Keep the compost at least 4 inches from the trunk.



③ Topdress blueberries with soil acidifier, fertilize with compost and (ideally) pine needle mulch.

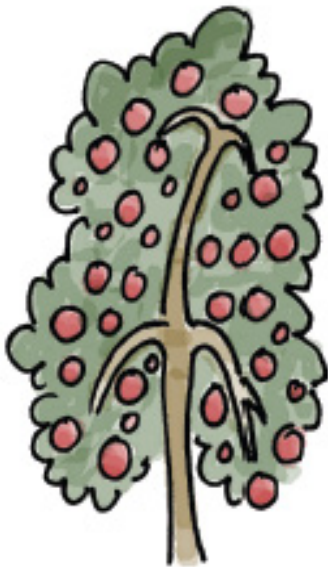
④ **Transplant companion plants** like Comfrey, Yarrow and Daffodil into the orchard ecosystem to attract beneficial insects and pollinators, repel pests, and mine nutrients from the subsoil.

⑤ **Apply 1st holistic Spring spray:** liquid fish, pure neem oil, effective microbes (i.e. compost tea). Aim at branches, trunk & ground surface around drip line of trees.

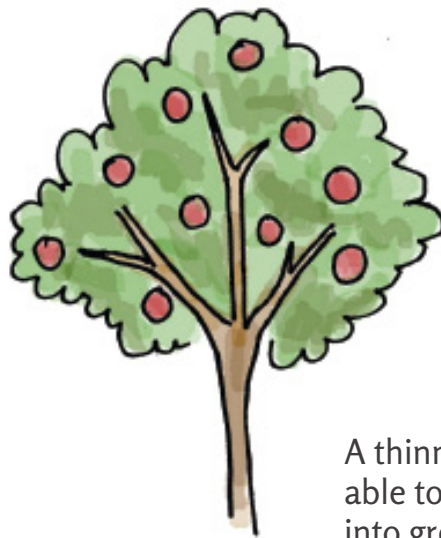
# May

- 1 Apply second holistic Spring spray: liquid fish, pure neem oil, effective microbes (i.e. compost tea) Add Bt to the spray mix for fruit trees whose unfurling leaves show a significant presence of bud moth larvae. Do NOT hit open blossoms directly w/ fatty oils from neem/fish oil.

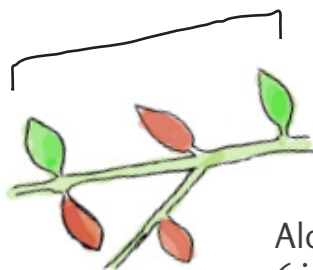
- 2 Thin fruit to reduce stress put on the tree, enable early pest prevention, and allow fruit to fully mature.



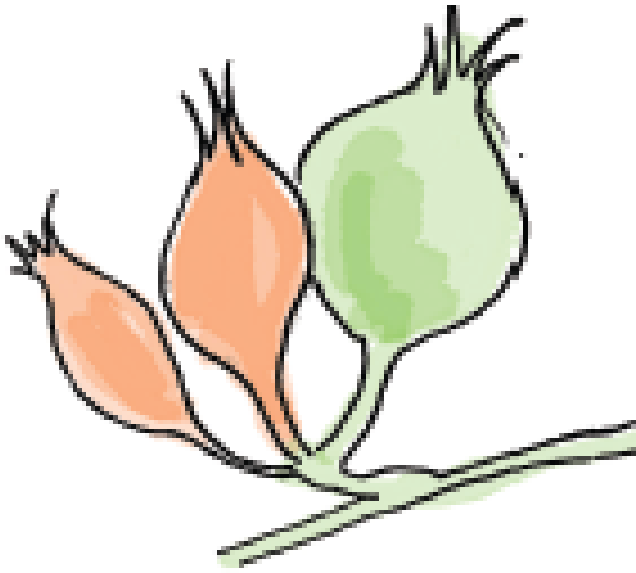
A tree that hasn't been thinned will produce a large quantity of fruit, but the fruit may not be big enough to eat and it may be rotten.



A thinned tree will be able to put its energy into growing fully developed fruit.



Along the branch, leave about 6 inches between fruitlets.



For fruit set clusters, generally remove all but the biggest fruitlet.



If the largest fruitlet has signs of pest damage, remove it and choose the next largest.

All picked fruit should be put in a yard waste bag to remove pests that might have laid eggs in the fruitlets or might eat the fallen fruit.



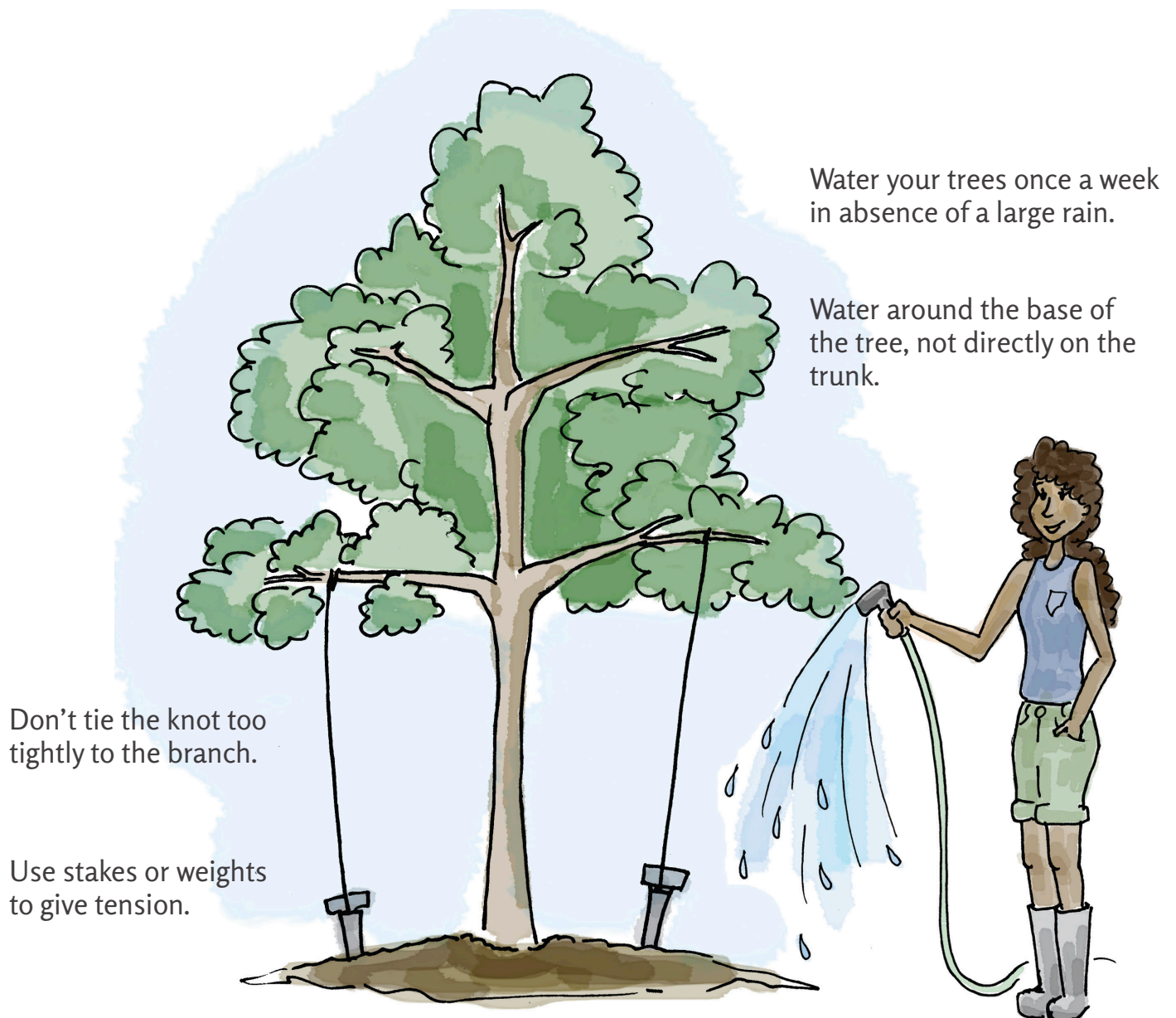
③ Hang bird netting over Cherries and Blueberries.

④ Weed around all fruit-bearing trees and shrubs.

# June

- ① Apply first Holistic Summer spray: pure Neem oil, effective microbes (i.e. compost tea). Add Horsetail tea, Nettle tea or fermented Comfrey tea to add bio-available micronutrients like silica (Horsetail) to prevent against summer diseases, or calcium (Comfrey) to aid with healthy fruit development. Seaweed extract for additional nutrients.
- ② Spray a refined Kaolin clay (like Surround) mixture every 5-7 days on fruit bearing trees where Curculios are a threat to developing fruitlets.
- ③ Chop & drop green mulch plants like Comfrey around base of fruit trees.
- ④ Weed around all fruit-bearing trees and shrubs.
- ⑤ Lay shade cloth over Blueberries that are in full sun (to prevent dessication!)

- ⑥ Train any branches that are longer than 2 feet to grow horizontally. Use string or bungee cords to gently pull the branches so they are parallel to the ground.



Water your trees once a week in absence of a large rain.

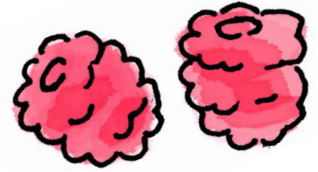
Water around the base of the tree, not directly on the trunk.

Don't tie the knot too tightly to the branch.

Use stakes or weights to give tension.



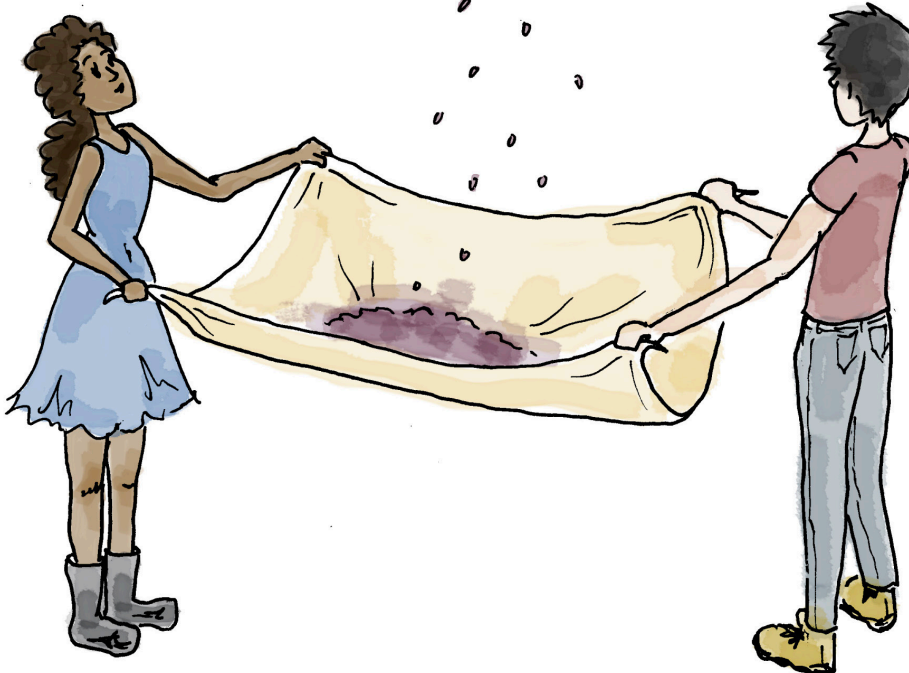
7 Harvest Mulberries, Blueberries, Service berries, cherries, Wineberries, and Raspberries.



Harvesting mulberries is easiest to do with a few people. You will need a **blanket** and some sort of **long stick** that will allow you to grab hold of the branch.

have one person grab hold of the branch and shake it just enough so that the ripe mulberries come loose.

Have the others hold the blanket underneath as the mulberries rain down.



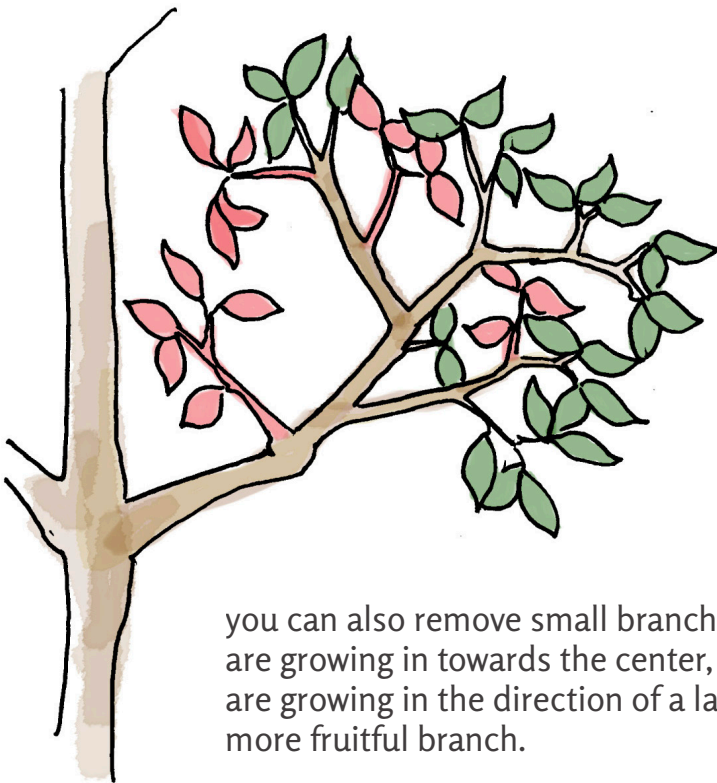
Also harvest pecans with this technique.

# July

- 1 Weed around all fruit-bearing trees and shrubs.

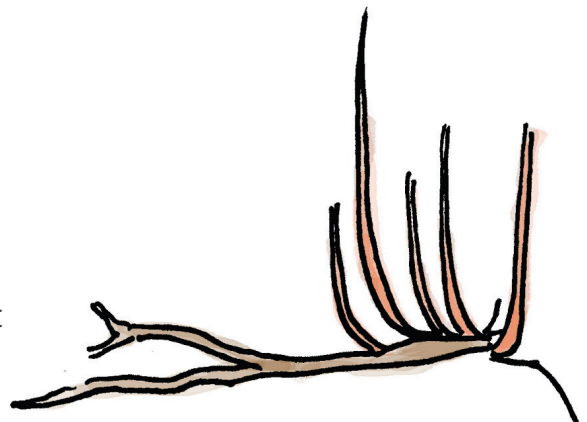


- 2 Summer prune for shape: Remove watersprouts/suckers and any small branches that are growing inward or into other healthy lateral branches.



you can also remove small branches that are growing in towards the center, or that are growing in the direction of a larger, more fruitful branch.

Summer Pruning is not as intensive as winter pruning. You should only prune small branches that can be cut with a hand shears. It is best for cutting away small growth before it becomes full branches that clutter the tree.



Use your shears to clean out root suckers, water sprouts, and other small unwanted growth on the tree.

- ③ Harvest Blueberries, Currants, Gooseberries, Blackberries & Plums. (Consider a Jam-making workshop!)



- ④ Spray your trees to prevent fungal damage.

Mix one quart of water with a half cup of low-fat milk. Adding a few drops of dish soap will help the mixture stick.



If you have just one or two trees, you can put the mixture in a hand held spray bottle and cover your trees. If you have more trees, you may want to consider a backpack sprayer.

# August

① **Apply second Holistic Summer spray.** Pure Neem oil, effective microbes (i.e. compost tea). Add Horsetail tea, Nettle tea or fermented comfrey tea to add bioavailable micronutrients, like silica (Horsetail), to prevent against summer diseases, or calcium (Comfrey) to aid with healthy fruit development. Seaweed extract adds additional nutrients.

② Weed around all fruit-bearing trees and shrubs.

③ Harvest Apples, Peaches, Pears, Figs, and Nectarines.



Apples and pears can withstand the force of a fruit picker. A fruit picker is a long pole with a metal claw and basket at the end. Hook the stem of the fruit and pull the fruit off the branch and into the basket.

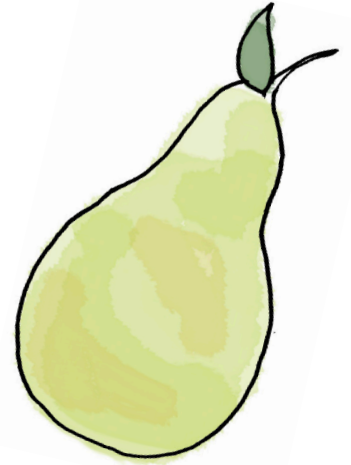
You can also use an a-frame ladder to get hard-to-reach fruits.



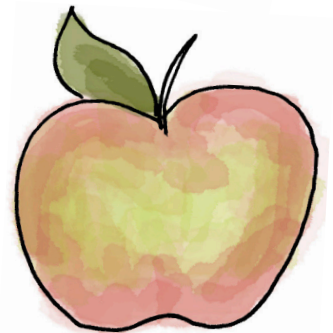
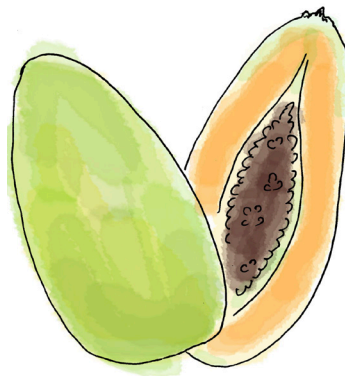
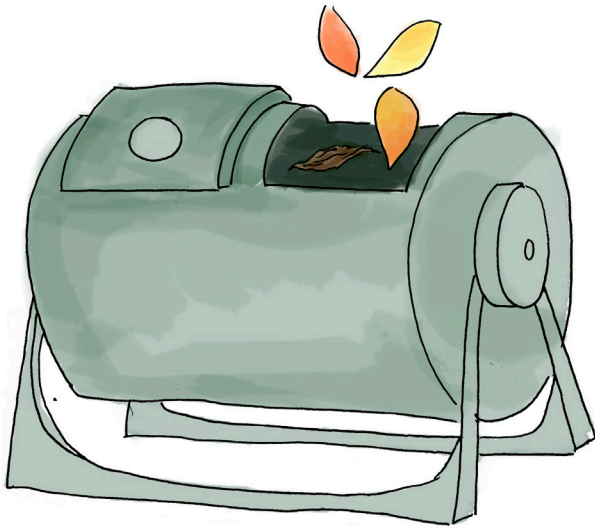
④ Continue watering your trees on a weekly basis.

# September

- 1 Continue harvesting apples and pears. Raspberries may have a second harvest around this time. You can also harvest elderberries, chestnuts, pawpaws, and hazelnuts.



pick up any fallen rotting fruit from the ground and throw it in a yard waste bag or a closed composter to prevent further pest damage and rot.



- 2 Install Vole protective rings around base of trees using hardware cloth and zipties.

- 3 Lay wood chip mulch around base of trees.

# October

- ① Harvest apples, pears, pecans, walnuts, and persimmons.



Pecans are harvested similarly to mulberries.

- ② Fall Holistic spray application (when over  $\frac{1}{2}$  of leaves have fallen...)— liquid fish, pure Neem oil, effective microbes (i.e. compost tea). Aim at branch and leaf-covered ground.



- ③ Celebrate a bountiful harvest!

**There are so many different ways to use your fruit.** You can press your more tart apples into cider. You can put thin slices through a dehydrator for dried fruit. You can bake or create whatever you choose or just enjoy the raw fruit. If you have too much fruit, consider sharing it with friends, family, neighbors, or even donate it to a local school or community center.

# November

- 1 Remove tree limb spreaders (only if branches have grown into desired shape!! Otherwise, leave them for one more growing season...)

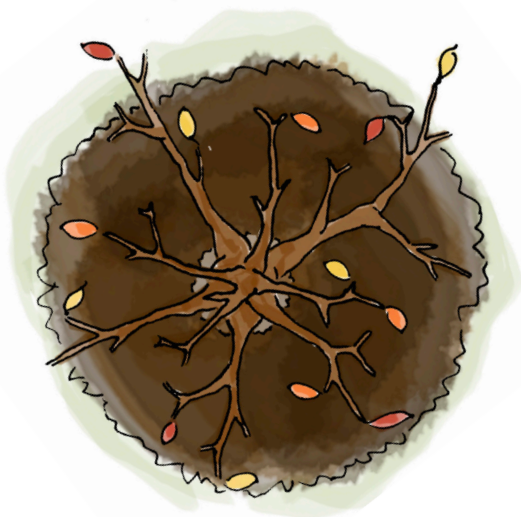
- 2 Rake fallen leaves and clear any remaining fruit from the tree and ground.



- 3 Harvest Apples and Persimmons.

- 4 Apply dormant season spray: horticultural oil, copper fungicide.

- 5 Spread a 2-inch layer of mulch in a donut around the base of your tree.



Mulch should remain 1-2 inches from the base of the tree.



- 6 Plant new trees. Trees should be planted at least 15-feet apart. (see March for more details)

# December

① Order rootstock for grafting projects.

② Remove all mummified fruit (dry darkened fruit still hanging on the trees) to reduce rot spore inoculum (i.e. to stop fungal pathogens from overwintering and spreading).



Remove any old, dried, mummified fruit left on the tree, and put it in a yard waste bag or a closed composter.



③ Think about new fruit trees for the spring planting season and order them soon.