

Greg Alder Discussions

Main talking points were:

Fruit trees flowering & the fruitset

Now most of our trees are asleep. Soon we will start to see flowers appearing.

Why doesn't my fruit tree make much Fruit?

He answers the question....

"Usually, it is all in the flowers & pruning". "Also, some trees need pollination help".

Flowers and why don't I have fruit

Flower making, where do they make the flowers. There are 4 patterns I find in trees. They can be grouped by tree type.

Apples & Pears

Flowers mostly on spurs. Spurs are stubby branches that appear on older branches. They form in clusters of flowers. They can also produce flowers on some of the tips of branches.

Why don't they produce fruit?

You may be cutting off the stubby branches when pruning.

Your tree may still be too young to form many spurs. The spurs are where the fruit comes from.

Apricots & Plums

Flowers mostly on spurs. It can also have flowers alongside of branches that had grown last year.

Why don't they produce fruit?

Similar to Apples & Pears, you may be cutting off the stubby branches when pruning. Or you may be pruning the young branches from last years growth.

Your tree may still be too young to form many spurs. The spurs are where the fruit comes from.

Peaches & Nectarines

They do not have spurs. They flower along sides of branches that grew from the previous year. A tip to know how to spot these branches is that they are a shade of red on the sunny side and underneath they are green.

Why don't they produce fruit?

It may be that you have pruned the young branches. It is easy to do because they are the ones usually on the outside of the tree.

Citrus & Avocado

They flower mostly at the tips of branches that grew from the previous summer. You will find the flowers will be at the tips or axillary bud spots on top of the leaf joint. They mostly flower on the outside because that is where the sun hits it.

Why don't they produce fruit?

You are most likely pruning it too much, especially after June & July.

Pruning in General

I'm not suggesting that you don't prune. I recommend pruning every year. Twice a year is best. Once in the winter and once in the summer. Doing it twice allows for you to not prune too much but doing it often keeps it healthy.

Prune more if it is necessary in the winter. Doing so in the summer may cause your tree to get sunburned from the heat in the summer.

My approach is to keep the trees small & fruitful 😊

What trees need pollination help?

Some trees need help in pollinating. They need a pollinator, usually a bee, to move the pollen from one flower to another. Not all fruit trees require pollinating but some do.

The following are trees that are called self-fertile or self pollinate:

- Peaches
- Nectarines
- Apricots
- Some Apples, plums, pears, avocados
- Citrus

The following are trees that require pollinating:

- Different varieties of plums, apples, plums, and avocados

How do you know if your tree requires pollinating?

- It should say on the label when you purchase it.
- Dave Wilson Nursery grows most of our apple, plum, and pear trees. You can look it up on their website.

Some trees have sterile pollen.

- These trees require another tree close by to pollinate.
- They do better with others close by to assist with pollination.

Avocados

- Haas & Reed will grow fine alone.
- Some avocado trees need help with pollinating
- They all will do better with others nearby to assist with pollination
- A & B type that are planted close together are best.

Space savings

- When planting pollinators plant them close together.

- They have grafted trees which are both types grafted together.
- You can always plant two trees in one hole for help with pollinating. The bees will move from one tree to another and think they are just staying on one tree.

Reasons why you don't have much fruit.

- You pruned too much of the spurs or new growth.
- The tree may need another for pollinating.
- The tree is too young. Many trees take a few years to develop enough to have fruit. If you have planted from seed they can take 5-10 years to produce fruit. Cherries are especially slow growing.
- Too much shade. Fruit trees require a lot of sun to produce a lot of fruit.
- Not enough chilling, they like cold winters. When we have a warm winter my trees do not produce as much as a cold winter.
- Soil is extremely nutrient deficient.
- There is a watering problem. It is not good to over water your trees. Their roots can become mildewed. Or you are watering too little. It's a trial-and-error process to find the right water for your plants.

Questions & Answers

What is the right time to fertilize?

It depends on what you are using and the kind of tree.

- If you are using organic or compost you can do it anytime.
 - I like putting compost in the winter. Because the compost is usually dry I get the benefit of the rain we get in the winter to water my compost down and it will get into the soil better.
- If you are using a chemical type it will leach into the soil and become lost by a lot of rain. So choose your timing wisely.

About watering fruit trees, I water once a week. I have a drip system and I will run it about 1-2 hours in the summer depending on how it gets. Is that good?

Once a week sounds ok in the summer.

- A more efficient approach may be to do the math or do trial & error by testing on one of your trees if you want to adjust.
- When checking the soil to determine if it is getting too much or too little water look below where your emitters are. Because you are using a drip system, the roots will naturally go to where the water is. The roots where there is no water will appear too dry, but they may actually be dormant.

When fertilizing, do we avoid when the trees are budding? What are the rules?

Some growers have schedules and they can change over the year. I think this is too complicated.

- I do not fertilize.
- I only use compost & mulch.
- It really depends on the quality of your soil. If you have junk soil you may need to fertilize.

If you have a lot of flowers in bunches, do we need to trim some away? To allow room for growth.

I do some thinning so the branches won't break.

- Take some off the tips.
- A fist size apart for peaches.
- 2-3 fingers apart for apricots.
- Mostly you should think about removing weight from the branches, so they won't break.
- You may need to do several rounds of thinning. Just keep checking until you feel your fruit has room and the branches are going to break.
- Doing this will also help remove the tight spaces between fruit. This is where bugs tend to like building a home.

When the trees are planted for pollinating how close do we plant them?

If they are planted very close you will get better pollination.

- The bees tend to stay on one tree and go from flower to flower.
- If you have planted two trees very close together, the bee will just go all around thinking it is one tree. It gives better pollination.
- Closer the better, touching.

For peach leaf curl how do we manage it? With sprays and what kind?

I don't spray my trees. I did this 12 years ago on a lemon tree with neem oil. It did nothing so I discontinued.

- My peaches get the curl. Some years are worst than others.
- Most varieties of the fruit is not effected by the curled leaves.
- By the end of summer the tree will naturally replace the leaves and they become beautiful again.
- Wet springs can make the peach leaf curl worst.
- During dry springs the trees are beautiful.

For a citrus or lemon trees, is now when we prune or do we wait until there are flowers?

I just pruned my lime.

- You can prune when there are some flowers.
- Do not prune when it is in full bloom. You could get stung by the honey bees that may be going from flower to flower.
- Prune on the outside canopy.

- The best citrus trees you cannot see through it.
- You don't need to open it up like in other trees.
- Prune it like a hedge. Top cut and side cuts. Citrus love it this way.

I heard that we should not rake the fallen avocado leaves, is this true?

Yes, leave a deep layer of leaves for protection.

- The roots like shade.
- If you pull back the leaves on the ground, you may see roots coming up under the moist mulch.
- The avocado tree likes a lot of water and they like to breathe air. The roots will come up to get more air.
- Very important to have a deep layer of mulch around your avocados to keep it moist and airy.
- They won't grow well in compact soil.