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SP307-D-Fruit Tree Management Timetable

The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service

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Fruits and Nuts

Fruit Tree Management Timetable

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Fruit production is a “year-round” job. For optimum results, each task should be done at a specific time of the year. These are shown in the diagram on page 3.

Fertilizing

Apply fertilizers approximately one month prior to the initiation of growth in spring. Refer to SP307-A, “Fertilizing and Liming Fruit Trees,” for more information. For types of fruits where frost damage frequently occurs, consider applying one-half the recommended rate of fertilizer at the time indicated above. If no frost injury occurs and bloom was heavy, apply the second half of the recommended rate of fertilizer soon after bloom. Where frost damage has resulted in severe crop reduction, eliminate or reduce the second fertilizer application to reduce excess vegetative growth.

Planting

Bare-root fruit trees should be planted from mid-February to mid-March. This assures good root-soil contact so plants can become established prior to the initiation of top growth. Refer to SP307-B, “Planting Fruit Trees,” for more information.

Pre-Bloom Sprays

These sprays include applications of dormant oils as well as fungicides for scab, rusts, mildews and other diseases, plus insecticides for early season insect control. Refer to Extension PB 1622, “Disease and Insect Control in Home Fruit Plantings,” for information on specific pesticides, rates and timing.

Pruning

Make large cuts when trees are completely dormant. Detailed pruning of stone fruits (peaches, nectarines, plums) should be delayed until after the danger of frost is past.

Bloom Sprays

Fireblight on apples and pears and blossom blight on stone fruits are examples of two disorders that require special sprays during blossom. Bees are essential for good pollination; do not apply insecticides at this time to protect them. Refer to Extension PB 1622, “Disease and Insect Control in Home Fruit Plantings,” for additional information.



Cover Sprays

Many insects and diseases will cause severe damage to fruits and foliage if left unchecked. Timely and thorough applications of the proper pesticides will assure higher quality fruit, healthier trees and higher yield of crops than will be obtained from unsprayed trees. Extension PB 1622, "Disease and Insect Control in Home Fruit Plantings," contains information on these sprays.

Fruit Thinning

Often, trees will set larger crops of fruit than they can handle. Removal of some fruit will result in increased size and quality of the remaining fruits, plus larger crops the following year. Thinning should be done when developing fruits are about the size of a nickel. Thin the earliest-ripening varieties first. Space fruit between 6 and 8 inches apart on the branches. Hand thinning gives the best results. Avoid spraying apples with Sevin insecticide within 30 days of bloom as it may thin apples. Chemical thinning is not recommended for home orchardists. Refer to SP307-E, "Fruit Thinning," for additional information.

Peach Tree Borer Sprays

Protect stone fruit trees by spraying the tree trunks during the summer months. For best control, thorough coverage of the trunk and basal part of the scaffold limbs with the spray solution is essential. Refer to Extension PB 1622, "Disease and Insect Control in Home Fruit Plantings," for additional information.

Order New Trees

To increase the chances of getting the size, variety and rootstock fruit trees you want, order them early. This is especially important for large orders or for varieties that are in strong demand. Order trees from reputable nurseries.

Harvesting

Recommended peach varieties for Tennessee will ripen from late June through late August. Plums will ripen from mid-June through mid-July. The ripening time for apples is from early July through mid-October, depending on variety and location.

Soil Testing

Before planting fruit trees and every third to fifth year after planting, soil test the orchard site. Proper soil pH and nutrient levels are essential for good tree survival, growth and fruiting. Contact your county Extension office for information and materials. Refer to SP307-A, "Fertilizing and Liming Fruit Trees," for additional information.

Rodent Control

Pine vole, meadow vole, prairie vole and cotton rat are all problems in orchards in various parts of Tennessee. Control methods include maintaining bare soil under the trees, mowing row middles and orchard perimeters throughout the summer, installing tree guards and removing or crushing dropped fruit. Where rodent problems in commercial orchards exist, rodenticides may be used effectively. Apply them from late October through early December.

Peach Leaf Curl Spray

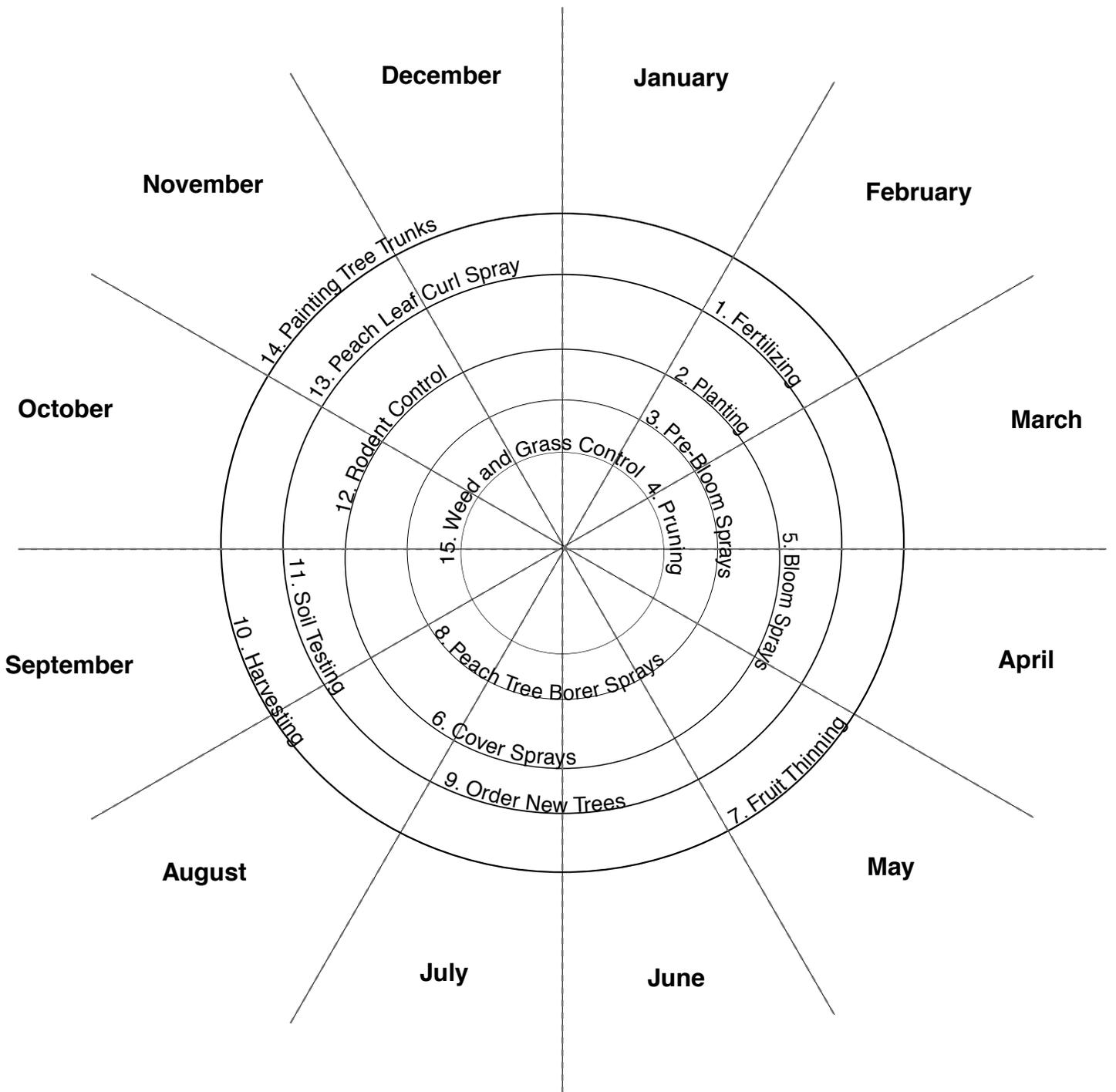
Peach leaf curl is a disease that may be controlled by spraying during the period from leaf drop in fall up to bud swell in spring. Refer to Extension PB 1622, "Disease and Insect Control in Home Fruit Plantings," for more information.

Painting Tree Trunks

Winter injury to tree trunks (also called southwest trunk injury) may be a severe problem in all fruit trees. Painting the lower 24 inches of tree trunks with a white latex paint will reduce trunk heating and subsequent tree damage in winter months. Apply paint on days with good drying conditions (warm, breezy) to minimize the risk of trunk injury.

Weed and Grass Control

Competition for moisture and nutrients is one of the main reasons to control vegetation under fruit trees. Reduction in insect, disease and rodent problems also may be recognized. Control methods include hand weeding, shallow cultivation, close mowing and using herbicides. This is a "year-round" job.



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