



## Planting & Training New Fruit Trees

- **Dig a nice wide hole** (2 to 3' wide) and deep enough to plant the tree at the same level that it was growing in the field (see the color change on the trunk below the graft and above the highest roots).
- **Water thoroughly to settle the soil.** Water regularly -- every day -- if it doesn't rain.
- **Paint** the entire trunk up to the lowest branch **with interior white latex paint** to prevent sunburn.
- **Stake it only if it seems top heavy.**

### Techniques for training your young fruit tree

There are different schools of thought on how and when to train your fruit tree.

We prune fruit trees for several reasons:

#### **to improve the quality of the fruit.**

Reducing fruit production leads to larger fruit with better flavor.

#### **to reduce the quantity of the fruit on an individual tree.**

Many fruit trees set far more fruit than the tree can hold, leading to limb breakage. Removing some of the fruit during the growing season helps, but pruning is important.

#### **to reduce the size of the tree.**

Why? So you can reach most of the fruit from the ground, protect it more readily from birds, get better spray coverage with a small hand-held sprayer, and fit a larger number of trees into a small area.

### "To Cut or Not to Cut?"

#### ***The conventional advice for homeowners***

When you buy your tree, **only prune off broken or damaged branches.** Allow it to grow for one full season, then begin your training in the next dormant season.

**The logic:** leaving as much of the top as possible the first year means more leaves providing food to the roots, so the tree establishes better. **Pruning it in the first year stunts the tree.**

#### ***What the orchardists advise for production trees***

When you buy the tree, **cut it back to about 36 inches** from the ground.

**The logic:** this enables you to start training the "scaffold" branches in the first year; these will be the branches that form the permanent structure of the tree. Cutting it lower than 36" makes it more difficult to get in under the tree to do work such as weeding and fertilizing. **Orchard growers are most concerned with developing a uniform structure and with ease of orchard operations, and don't care if it is somewhat stunted.**

#### **Both techniques work! What we recommend:**

Trim only the broken parts and awkward branches when you plant it, and let it grow the first summer. Prune for size control next winter, cutting down to where existing branches are already growing. Exactly how you do this will vary, depending on the type of tree and where it produces fruit. Severe pruning when you plant may slow the development of the tree and delay fruit production somewhat, but will not harm the tree in the long run.