

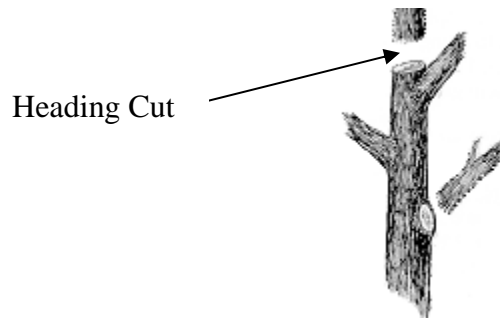


Pruning Avocado trees

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Most avocados don't need a lot of pruning. However, pruning avocado trees can be beneficial in some cases. Pruning these trees is different than pruning other trees, so there are a few things you should know beforehand. In general, avocado trees require an abundance of healthy foliage to assure high yields. In most cases such abundance is best achieved by pruning only when absolutely necessary.

Since avocado trees grow irregularly and different varieties have different growth habits, pruning methods will vary. Trees which tend to develop spreading canopies do best with a minimum of pruning. Tall, upright varieties, which become veritable "beanpoles" producing fruit high above the ground, can benefit from judicious training (heading cuts), especially during the first years of the tree's life. To prevent the upward growth of the main leader, the terminal buds should be removed. This stimulates the growth of lateral branches forcing the tree to spread out and become more compact.



Danger of breakage from wind is reduced and the fruit will be borne on limbs closer to the ground where it can be picked more easily. Excessive pruning of young trees will slow their growth since food producing foliage (food is manufactured in the leaves) necessary to the tree is removed.

The yield of bearing avocado trees is in direct proportion to the amount of healthy wood and foliage on the tree. Heavy pruning does not increase fruit production but reduces it by stimulating new vegetative growth at the expense of fruit production.

Preventive Pruning

The shock of pruning can be lessened by selective removal of growing tips which gets rid of unwanted branches before they are formed. This might be termed "preventive" pruning and results in the loss of a minimum of food producing foliage.

Since heavy cutting lowers yield and stimulates new growth, a better way to control size may be by frequent light pruning (Thinning cuts) whereby new growing points are pinched or cut out. The frequency and amount of pruning needed will depend on the variety and vigor of the tree and upon the environmental characteristics of different avocado growing areas.



Year 1 - 1st Thinning cuts made

Year 2 – New growth and new Thinning cuts

Pruning to control the height of avocado trees requires constant follow-up. Re-growth after topping is vigorous and rapid and the trees soon regain their original height unless the new growth is thinned and cut back. In hand pruning, cuts are made as close to lateral branches as possible to reduce new sprouting. Mechanical pruning does not do this and two or three shoots develop from around the end of each cut branch.

When to Prune Avocados

Timing plays an important role in pruning avocado trees. Light trimming can be done at any time of the year because avocado trees are evergreen. However, if you want to do heavy trimming on the tree, you should only do it in late winter or early spring. These are the best times to prune the trees heavily.

Pruning in early spring gives a greater stimulus to vegetative growth than pruning during mid-summer, while pruning in late summer or fall will cause re-growth which may not harden off and is more susceptible to frost injury.

Again, cutting should be kept to a minimum since the removal of large branches will cause more growth higher on the tree.

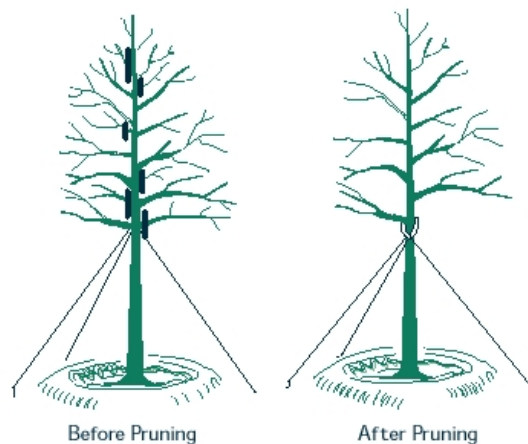
Pruning for Balance

Balance is one of the most important things you need to know about pruning

avocado trees. Many people buy trees from a nursery that has had the roots cut. You will need to trim the top of the tree since most of the root system has been removed. If you don't trim the top of the tree to restore the balance, the tree may grow weakly.

Pruning for Sun Exposure

Avocado trees grow thickly, so it is sometimes necessary to prune the tree (Thinning cuts) to allow sunlight to reach the lower branches. When pruning avocado trees for this reason, you need to make sure you don't create too many open areas in the tree. This will expose major branches to heavy sunlight that could damage them.



Freeze Effects

If freeze damage occurs, you should wait until spring before pruning avocado trees. During spring, new growth starts to appear. Branches that may look dead in the fall or winter may not really be dead, so you will want to wait until during the spring before you start pruning avocado trees.

Pruning Twigs

Many people make the mistake of cutting off terminal twigs when they're pruning avocado trees. However (like mangoes and longans) these trees grow fruit at the end of these branches (terminal fruiting). If you cut these twigs off when pruning avocado trees, a lot of fruit won't be produced when the tree blooms again.

References:

California Avocado Society 1962 Yearbook
Five Tips for Pruning Avocado Trees - <http://www.associatedcontent.com>