** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at https://ksre-learn.com/thinning-fruit-trees

Note to editors: A photo of Cynthia Domenghini is available at https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksrecomm/53721503579

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Thin fruit trees to promote years of bountiful harvests

K-State horticulture expert shares tips for fruit trees grown in Kansas

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – It might be tempting to try to bring in a heavy fruit crop this summer, but if homeowner's trees are young, it's not such a great idea.

Kansas State University horticulture expert Cynthia Domenghini said gardeners instead should be thinking about thinning fruit trees in favor of a bountiful crop in future years.

"Allowing young trees to produce a heavy crop can cause damage to the branches due to the weight and can reduce the size of the fruit this year," Domenghini said.

She shared guidelines for determining which fruit to thin and which to leave intact:

- **Apples and pears.** Leave 6-8 inches between fruit. Apples tend to produce fruit in clusters of five. Remove all but one fruit from each cluster. Leave the largest, healthiest fruit.
- **Peaches.** Leave 6-8 inches between fruit. Peaches tend to cluster together. The average space should be about 7 inches apart.
- **Plums and prunes.** Space fruit 4-5 inches apart.
- **Apricots.** Space fruit 2-4 inches apart.

"Some fruit can be closer, but the recommended spacing will limit the amount of fruit on each branch, and the fruit should grow well," Domenghini said.

She added that fruit can be removed by snipping it with clippers, or snapping the fruit stem with your fingers – being careful not to damage the branch.

Tip blackberries, black raspberries and purple raspberries

Domenghini said raspberries and blackberries have the same growing and fruiting habits. Their perennial root systems grow for several years; the canes are biennial – meaning that they live for two years.

“The first year’s canes are called primocanes and do not produce fruit,” she said. “In the second year, the primocanes become floricanes, which fruit and then die. Primocanes are produced each year, so plants have both types of canes present simultaneously.”

She adds that primocanes should be tipped by removing the top 2-3 inches, which promotes branching and fruiting.

Domenghini and her colleagues in K-State's Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens. The newsletter is available to view online or can be delivered by email each week.

Interested persons can subscribe to the weekly newsletter, or submit their garden and yard-related questions, by sending email to Domenghini at cdom@ksu.edu. More information also is available at your local K-State Research and Extension office.

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Sidebar
Question of the Week

Should I be spraying for bagworms now?

Insecticides containing the active ingredients *Bacillus thuringiensis* (subspecies *kurstaki)* or spinosad are effective if used when larvae are small and plant foliage is thoroughly covered.

If applied now, you will miss many of the larvae that are still hatching. Typically, we recommend waiting to apply insecticide until mid-June when the majority of the larvae are actively feeding.

If you treat now, you will need to repeat applications on a weekly basis until mid to late June to ensure all the larvae have hatched. As larvae reach maturity, they eat less, which reduces their exposure to insecticides. By August, when they seal inside the bags, insecticide is completely ineffective.

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FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
K-State Horticulture Newsletter, https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/newsletters/index.html

K-State Research and Extension local offices, https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html

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