

# Fruit Tree Care Guide



## Watering Year 1

- Water your tree immediately after planting.
- Water deeply and often for newly planted trees. How often will depend on the soil – 2-4 times per week for the first two weeks then scale back to 1-2 times per week for the first year. Check soil moisture to know whether it is time to water – look at the soil a few inches down, if it is getting dry it's time for more water. Don't let the soil completely dry out.
- Water your tree with about 5 gallons of water in the early morning or late evening, and water slowly over an extended period.

## Watering Years 2 +

- After the first year scale watering back to once every week or two depending on the season – more often in summer, less often in winter. Continue checking soil moisture once a week to know how often to water for your location and soil type.

## Watering Tips

- Do not over-water, too much water can kill your tree as easily as not enough
- Look for signs of drying leaves on the tree to know if it is getting enough water – be aware that fruit trees are usually deciduous and leaves will turn brown and fall off each fall/winter.
- Expand the watering diameter as the tree grows. Roots will begin to extend beyond the canopy after the first year.

## Pruning

- Prune for size between May and August: Prune back some of the spring growth to keep your tree a manageable size and height. Always cut with clean sharp pruners just above a bud of growth. The direction your cut faces will determine the direction of new growth so be careful not to encourage a tangle towards the center of the tree.
- Prune for shape in January or February: This is a time when leaves and fruit won't clutter your view so you can clear away any broken or dead branches and any crisscrossing branches, and open up space in the center of the tree to ensure light and air can penetrate.
- If you see any branches coming from the base of the tree these should be removed, as well as any suspiciously straight branches higher up. These are suckers that drain resources from the tree without producing fruit.
- Exactly how much to cut back and where to place your cuts will depend on the type of tree and your preferences, so consult with a master gardener for more details. The Master Gardener helpline is available by phone at (626) 586-1988 or email at [mglosangeleshelpline@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mglosangeleshelpline@ucdavis.edu).

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## Other

- Do not use fertilizer on your trees for the first year, instead consider natural soil amendments like compost.
- Mulch the area under your tree to help retain moisture – 3" depth with at least 4" of space around the trunk of the tree.
- Remove lodge poles when the trunk is strong enough to withstand a strong storm, this will be after about 2-4 years, but may take longer.
- Keep the area 6 inches around the tree trunk clear of weeds and grass. Do NOT let a weed whacker get too close to the trunk, it will kill the delicate parts of the tree trunk which carry water and nutrients to the tree.

## What to Do With Excess Fruit

- Community Crop Swaps are a way for neighbors to exchange what they're growing in their community gardens and homes. Contact Long Beach Fresh at (562) 704-6909 for information on current swaps and how to start your own sharing networks in your neighborhood to help reduce food waste.
- Harvest Partners LB is an urban fruit rescue program that harvests and donates to local food pantries in Long Beach. To contact them, please email [harvestpartnerslb@ourcityheart.org](mailto:harvestpartnerslb@ourcityheart.org)
- Food Finders is a food rescue program that works to gather food that would be wasted and re-distributes it to food banks. To contact them, call (562) 283-1400 x105 or email [cwong@foodfinders.org](mailto:cwong@foodfinders.org).
- Food Banks and Pantries in Long Beach regularly accept food donations.