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### **Thinning Excess Fruit**

With any luck, you're going to have a good fruit crop this year! It might be hard to believe, but fruit trees can actually have enough fruit in some cases that thinning might be required. Why?

For starters, heavy fruit crops can interfere with fruit bud development that will occur this summer that can result in reductions in the crop next year (most often in apples). Thinning helps ensure that good crops are produced each year.

A second benefit of thinning is to promote larger fruit on the current year's crop. Fruit trees can only produce so many fruit. Too many fruit equals a reduction in fruit size and quality.

Limb damage is also an issue. The weight of a maturing fruit crop can break branches that some thinning might help preserve.

Thinning recommendations vary with the type of tree. Apples and pears should be thinned to four to six inches apart, while peaches should be spaced six to eight inches apart. Apricot spacing is two to four inches and plums/prunes should be spaced four to five inches apart. Cherries do not need to be thinned. Shoot for an average of these spacings to help with fruit size and tree health!

### **Peach Leaf Curl**

It's been a good year for peach leaf curl!

Peach leaf curl is a fungal disease that causes developing peach leaves to become puckered and distorted with a reddish-green hue. Severely infected trees may lose leaves. Fortunately, healthy trees will put out new leaves and the disease won't be a long-term issue. Fungicide applications won't do any good at this point this year.

If the tree is less than healthy – small pale leaves and less than ideal growth from last year, a fertilizer application might be in order! Spread fertilizer on the soil surface under the branch area, using one and a third to two cups of a 13-13-13 fertilizer. Do so as soon as possible to promote new leaf growth.

Plan ahead for next year as well! Peach leaf curl can be controlled with a single fungicide application with products containing Bordeaux mixture or chlorothalonil applied this fall after leaf drop or early next spring before bud swell.