

## Notes on Pruning

- When pruning always make sure to use sharp tools (secateurs for young trees and small branches, pruning saws for older trees).
- Clean your tools before and after using and in between working on different trees. This is to avoid spreading any plant diseases.
- There are two types of pruning: winter pruning is done when the tree is dormant and is used to **encourage strong new growth**. Summer pruning slows down growth and can be used to keep the tree at a particular size. To begin with we will only use winter pruning. Our trees are very young and they need time to establish. In a few years time you might want to switch to summer pruning if your tree is growing in a small space.
- Why do we prune: to encourage growth, to adapt the tree to our growing environment and to encourage fruiting.
- Pruning is an art form and there isn't a one size fits all approach. Observe your tree carefully, check in with your fellow growers or other gardeners you know if you're unsure.
- What will happen if I don't prune? Your tree will keep on growing and you may still end up with a good crop. There are plenty of feral apple trees which seem to do just fine without our help! But pruning will mean that you can adapt the tree to suit the space and end up with the best harvest.

## How to winter prune:

- You are aiming for an open, goblet shape. You should be able to see light through the branches and a bird should be able to fly through it easily (with thanks to Monty Don for this pearl of wisdom).
- When you cut off a branch, leave the growth ring still attached to the tree. This is a small, raised ring close to the trunk. If you can't see it, run your finger over it until you can feel it.
- If your tree is growing in a tall straight line you can take a bit off the top to encourage side branching.
- Consider doing your winter pruning late in the season, eg February. This reduces the amount of time that the tree will spend with open cuts before new growth begins.
- As your tree matures you may end up taking off the lower branches so that the energy goes into the upper branches. This also keeps the ground under the tree accessible for weeding and mulching.
- If you prune off all your flower buds then it follows that you will end up with no flowers and no fruit for that year. A flower bud sticks out a bit more than a leaf bud and is usually

a bit downy or fluffy. I'd recommend looking at some pictures and comparing them with your own tree. Here's a good article from the RHS:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/fruit/apples/identifying-fruit-buds>

- Here is a general guide from the orchard project about pruning. It has some useful diagrams which are good if you're a visual learner like me!

[https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/guides\\_and\\_advice/pruning-apple-trees/](https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/guides_and_advice/pruning-apple-trees/)

- When you prune, cut just above just above an outward facing bud. This will produce a new lateral shoot that will grow away from the centre of the tree. This means that the centre of your tree won't get tangled up.