

PREPARING THE HOME ORCHARD FOR WINTER

You can help prevent damage to your fruit trees by preparing them for winter, says James A. Fizzell, Horticulturist with the University of Illinois in Cook County.

Mow all grass and weeds around the trunks of the trees. Use hand clippers on vegetation you cannot cut with a lawn mower. Be sure not to nick the bark. Unmowed vegetation provides cover for field mice which eat the inner bark of trunks and roots, frequently killing fruit trees.

Rabbits eat the bark off the trunk and any branches within reach, particularly on young fruit trees. However, Fizzell notes, they do not bother older trees which have developed heavy outer bark. Mechanical barriers are recommended for protection from rabbits. Use chicken wire or hardware cloth to form a cylinder around the trunk. The cylinder should be at least 2 inches from the trunk, and high enough to provide protection in the event of heavy snow cover. Or, wrap the trunk with newspapers, waterproof paper, or tree wrap.

Wrapping the trunk will also help protect the trunk from winter sun scald, says Fizzell, and will benefit even older trees not subject to rabbit damage. Trunk wrapping does not keep the trunk warmer, but provides shade from the winter sun which could elevate the temperatures of the inner bark to the point where it begins growing even in mid-winter. When the sun sets, temperatures rapidly drop to freezing or lower; this causes ice crystals to form in the inner bark, killing it. Such injury usually occurs on the south or southwest side of the trunk, the area most likely to be warmed by winter sunlight, and may not become apparent until the next summer. Some nurseries are investigating white paint on the trunk as a protection from winter sun damage.

Remove paper wrappings when growth starts in the spring as these wrappings provide cover for insects which may injure the trunk during the growing season. Of major concern in winter survival of fruit trees is drainage, says Fizzell. Fill low areas so water will not stand around the tree trunks and roots during the winter months. Such conditions are ideal for development of disease organisms which could attack the trees at the soil line and kill them.

**James A. Fizzell, Senior Extension Adviser
Horticulture**

I WANT TO BE YOUR FRIEND

I see you at the meetings, but you never say hello,
You're busy all the time you're there,
with those you already know.
I sit amongst the members and yet I'm a lonesome guy;
The new ones are as strange as I, but
you old members pass me by.
But darn it, you folks asked us in,
and talked of fellowship,
You could just step across the room,
but you've never made the trip.
Why can't you nod and say hello, or stop
and shake my hand; then go and sit
among your friends, now that I'd understand.
I'll be at your next meeting, perhaps
a nice time to spend;
Do you think you could introduce yourself?
I want to be your FRIEND.

THE CLOCK OF LIFE

The clock of life is wound but once
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop
At late or early hour:
Now is the only time you own
Live, love, toil with a will
Place no faith in "tomorrow" for
The clock may then be still.
— John S. Swift Co., Inc.

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