



Basic Orchard Pest and Disease Management

Properly fertilized, watered and pruned trees will greatly reduce pest and disease problems. The healthier the tree, the more it will take care of itself. This is a basic layout of orchard pest and disease management.

Spring/Summer

DO NOT spray with any type of insecticide during bloom to let the bees pollinate unharmed. On pears and apples, you can spray fire blight spray during bloom as the label directs. This is a good idea due to the high fire blight pressure in the South.

It is also a good idea to look for wood bores in the spring and summer. You will notice them by seeing little holes in the lower trunk with saw dust or gumming with saw dust in it. The only way to kill the bore is to make direct contact with it by spraying into the hole and trunk with an insecticide rated for bores.

Apples, Nectarines, Peaches and Plums will most likely take some spray management for a really successful crop. If you don't want to do any or as much spraying, it is a good idea to grow faster ripening types that are ready no later than mid summer so there is less time that the fruit is on the tree. If you want fruit for late summer and fall to extend your harvest season, choose other types of fruit that are hardier, like Pears and Persimmons.

There are many different types of sprays you can use, but here are three types we have found to work well:

Bonide Orchard Spray (Excellent but not Natural)

Bonide Fruit Tree Spray (Good and Natural)

Fertilome Fruit Tree Spray (Good and Natural)



Regardless of what you use, never spray in the heat of the day. When temperatures start getting hot, you want to spray in the mornings and even in the evenings during the hottest part of the summer to keep leaves from being burned. For best results, do not use the same product each time you spray so that pests and diseases will not build tolerance to what you're using. Always follow the directions on the label.

As for most other fruits, diseases and pests are not as much of a problem. You may want to spray with horticultural oil every month or so for aphids or spider mites, but overall management is not as intense. There can be larger problems that will need to be dealt with only on an "as needed" basis, but they are not nearly as common.

Fall/Winter

Once most or all of the leaves have fallen, spray the entire orchard with a mixture of horticulture oil and copper to kill any over-wintering pests and diseases.

Late Winter – Do a follow-up spray of the same mixture in late winter, before bud-break in the spring. Do most of your orchard pruning in late winter so that the open cuts are not exposed for too long until they can heal when spring arrives. Late winter pruning is also important because you can still see the entire tree, bush or vine without leaves. This makes it easy to give proper cuts, and there is less bleeding due to dormancy.