Apricots: Calendar of Operations for Home Gardeners

Pamela M. Geisel is UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor in Environmental Horticulture for Fresno County; Carolyn L. Unruh is UCCE staff writer for Fresno County; and Paul Vossen is UCCE Farm Advisor in Fruits, Vegetables, and Marketing for Sonoma and Marin Counties.

The early blooming habit of apricots gives them a more limited range than that of peaches and nectarines. Late spring frosts tend to damage apricot blossoms and limit fruit set. Apricots also are poorly adapted to areas with extremes of high summer temperature because the fruit of many varieties are prone to heat damage. Some varieties, such as 'Patterson,' tend to exhibit less pit burning than other varieties in hot inland valleys or desert climates. Most apricot trees do not require a second variety for cross-pollination. The soil should be well drained and should receive regular irrigation.

Winter Dormant Season

- If peach twig borer, San Jose scale, mites, or aphids have been recurring problems, spray the trees with dormant oil to control these pests.

Spring Bloom Season

- As blooms start to open, spray trees to control brown rot of flowers and twigs. One effective chemical is chlorothalonil(apply according to label instructions). During rainy periods, you may need to re-apply chemicals more frequently.
- If you use drip irrigation, apply just the amount of water needed to replace what is used by the tree and lost from the soil through evaporation. If you use sprinkler or flood irrigation, water about every two to three weeks, and provide enough water to wet the soil to a depth of 18 to 24 inches. Water requirements will vary depending on environmental conditions and your soil type.
- Fertilize mature trees just prior to the first irrigation with 3 to 4 pounds of ammonium sulfate. Water the fertilizer in immediately to prevent nitrogen losses.
- Thin fruits to about 4 to 6 inches apart when they are 1/2 to 5/8 inch in diameter. This will help to increase fruit size and prevent limb breakage.
- Paint the trunks and lower branches of young trees with a 1:1 mixture of white interior latex paint and water to prevent sunburn injury and to reduce borer infestations. Apply the paint mixture from 2 inches below the soil surface to 2 feet above.

Summer Growing Season

- Continue to irrigate at regular intervals to maintain adequate soil moisture.
- Harvest fruit when fully ripe. In some varieties, all of the fruit on a tree will not ripen at the same time and they may need to be harvested over a period of weeks. Fruit may be stored briefly at room temperature, or for longer periods under refrigeration. Sun drying is also a great way to preserve apricots.

Autumn

- Prune trees before the onset of winter rains (by early September) to prevent Eutypa fungus infection of pruning wounds. Remove about 20 percent of last year's growth to let light into the trees. Remove old, broken, and diseased branches. Renew spurs whenever possible by cutting back on older wood.
- If shot hole fungus was a problem during the growing season, help control it by spraying trees during or after leaf fall but before the onset of winter rains. Use bordeaux or a fixed-copper fungicide, following label instructions. Avoid the use of sulfur on apricot trees.

For More Information

Cousult these UC IPM Pest Notes online at http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu:

Aphids
Bordeaux Mixture
Scales

University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources
Publication 7259

You'll also find information on fruit and nut tree care in these titles from UC ANR:

California Master Gardener Handbook, publication 3382
Drip Irrigation in the Home Landscape, publication 21579
Pests of the Garden and Small Farm, publication 3332
Pruning Fruit and Nut Trees, publication 21171
Sweet Cherries for the Home Grounds, publication 2951
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WARNING ON THE USE OF CHEMICALS

Carefully follow all precautions and safety recommendations given on the container label. Store all chemicals in their original labeled containers in a locked cabinet or shed, away from foods or feeds, and out of the reach of children, unauthorized persons, pets, and livestock.

Confine chemicals to the property being treated. Avoid drift onto neighboring properties, especially gardens containing fruits and/or vegetables ready to be picked.

Mix and apply only the amount of pesticide you will need to complete the application. spray all the material according to label directions. Do not dispose of unused material by pouring down the drain or toilet. Do not pour on ground: soil or underground water supplies may be contaminated. follow label directions for disposing of container. Never burn pesticide containers.

PHYTOTOXICITY: Certain chemicals may cause plant injury if used at the wrong stage of plant development or when temperatures are too high. Injury may also result from excessive amounts or the wrong formulation or from mixing incompatible materials. Inert ingredients, such as wetters, spreaders, emulsifiers, diluents, and solvents, can cause plant injury. Since formulations are often changed by manufacturers, it is possible that plant injury may occur, even though no injury was noted in previous seasons.

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