

**UC MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM  
OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY**



The UC Master Gardener Program is a public service and outreach program under the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR), administered locally by participating UC Cooperative Extension offices (UCCE). Our mission is to extend research based knowledge and information on home horticulture, pest management, and sustainable landscape practices to the residents of California.

**FRUIT TREES: FRUIT THINNING POINTERS**  
**Charles Davis, UC Master Gardener**

1. Thinning is done to avoid: (1) alternate bearing, (2) breakage of branches due to excessive crop, and (3) to allow for better air circulation around the fruit to prevent disease (especially if the fruit is touching).
2. Trees that do not require thinning when mature: cherries, figs, pomegranates, citrus and nuts.
3. Trees that do require thinning when mature: Stone fruits - peach, nectarine, apricot and plum; Pome Fruits: apples, Asian pears, and most European Pears.
4. Thinning should always be done if the crop is excessive, relative to the vigor of the tree.
5. Thinning can be done right after bloom until just before harvest---it is best to wait until after any natural drop occurs (early April for early ripening fruit to mid-May or June for late ripening fruit). Waiting too long reduces the tree's vigor which may result in a "light" bearing year the following season. The tree needs time to recover.
6. Stone fruit are best thinned when the fruit is ¾-1" in diameter; pome fruits, ½-1" in diameter.
7. Peaches and nectarines: thin to about 5-7" apart. Remove all doubled and small, disfigured or damaged fruit. Greater distance is needed between larger fruit.
8. Apricots, plums, pluots and apriums: apricots and apriums - 3-5" apart; plums and pluots - 4-6" apart. The narrower spacing reflects the relative size of the fruit.
9. Apples and pears: normally thin to one fruit per cluster. If crop is light, leave two per cluster. If crop is heavy ensure the fruit is a minimum of 6-8" apart.
10. Quinces do not require thinning; persimmons are often not thinned, but thinning will increase fruit size.
11. Thinning should be done carefully - do not simply pull the fruit off or you may remove the entire spur. Instead, remove by twisting or cutting with clippers (especially for apples and pears, which are hard to remove).
12. Thin by hand or by pole, if necessary due to the size of the tree.

References:

Ingels, Chuck A, Pamela M Geisel, and Norton V Maxwell. 2007. *The Home Orchard*. Oakland, Calif.: University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources.

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GARDENING QUESTIONS? ASK THE MASTER GARDENERS AT HELPLINE: 805-781-5939



Website: Master Gardeners San Luis Obispo

Availability	on VMS > Documents/Presentations > INFORMATIONAL DOCUMENTS >
History	Original: Revised: month/year: