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December Orchard Checklist

The December jobs for your fruit trees, by climate band. Months are typical for each band: let your local frost dates and your trees have the final say.

Cold zones 3–5

- ☐ Cut grass short around young trees
  Late fall · Young trees · Zones 4, 5
- ☐ Fit hardware-cloth guards against mice and rabbits
  Late fall, before winter feeding starts · Young trees · Zones 4, 5
- ☐ Fence or cage trees where deer browse
  Late fall, through winter · Zones 4, 5

Middle zones 6–7

- ☐ Rake up and remove fallen fig leaves
  Late fall, after leaf drop · Figs · Zone 7 only
- ☐ Protect figs with mounded mulch in late fall
  Late fall, after a hard frost · Figs · Zone 7 only
- ☐ Plant dormant trees in late fall
  Late fall to early winter, once trees are dormant · New trees · Zone 7 only
- ☐ Cut grass short around young trees
  Late fall · Young trees
- ☐ Fit hardware-cloth guards against mice and rabbits
  Late fall, before winter feeding starts · Young trees
- ☐ Paint trunks white after two years of guards
  Late fall · Young trees
- ☐ Rake up and destroy fallen leaves
  After leaf fall · Pears, persimmons
- ☐ Rake up fallen leaves and fruit
  After leaf fall · Apples
- ☐ Peach leaf curl treatment window after leaf fall †
  Just after leaf fall; again before bud swell in wet winters · Peaches, nectarines

Warm zones 8–10

- ☐ Cover small citrus trees before a freeze
  Winter, whenever a freeze is forecast · Citrus · Zones 9, 10
- ☐ Build a soil bank around young trunks
  Thanksgiving to the first of March · Citrus · Young trees · Zones 9, 10
- ☐ Move potted citrus to shelter during freezes
  Winter, whenever a freeze is forecast · Citrus · Zones 9, 10
- ☐ Pick ripe fruit ahead of a hard freeze
  Winter, when a hard freeze is forecast · Citrus · Bearing trees · Zones 9, 10
- ☐ Plant bare-root figs December to February
  December to late February · Figs · New trees · Zone 9 only
- ☐ Rake up and remove fallen fig leaves
  Late fall, after leaf drop · Figs · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Water figs a few days before hard freezes
  Ahead of hard freezes in dry falls and winters · Figs · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Protect figs with mounded mulch in late fall
  Late fall, after a hard frost · Figs · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Move potted figs into a cool, dark shelter
  After a hard frost · Figs · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Plant dormant trees in late fall
  Late fall to early winter, once trees are dormant · New trees · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Cut grass short around young trees
  Late fall · Young trees · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Fit hardware-cloth guards against mice and rabbits
  Late fall, before winter feeding starts · Young trees · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Rake up and destroy fallen leaves
  After leaf fall · Pears, persimmons · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Clean and disinfect pruners when cutting diseased wood
  Whenever you prune out diseased wood · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Prune persimmons lightly in winter
  Winter, while dormant · Persimmons · Bearing trees · Zone 9 only
- ☐ Train young persimmons to a modified leader
  Winter, first few years · Persimmons · Young trees · Zone 9 only
- ☐ Remove fire blight cankers while dormant
  Dormant season · Apples, pears · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Rake up fallen leaves and fruit
  After leaf fall · Apples · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Peach leaf curl treatment window after leaf fall †
  Just after leaf fall; again before bud swell in wet winters · Peaches, nectarines · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Prune out black knot galls in late winter
  Late winter, on a day below freezing · Cherries, plums · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Plant dormant fruit trees in winter
  December to February · Stone fruit and cherries, apples, pears, persimmons, pomegranates · New trees · Zones 9, 10
- ☐ Head back new trees to knee height
  At winter planting · Stone fruit, apples, pears · New trees · Zones 9, 10
- ☐ Keep a weed-free, mulched circle around trees
  After winter planting, then keep it up · Stone fruit and cherries, apples, pears, figs, persimmons, pomegranates · Young trees · Zones 9, 10
- ☐ Prune dormant fruit trees in winter
  December to February · Apples, pears, peaches, nectarines, plums · Zones 9, 10
- ☐ Paint trunks white against sunburn
  At winter planting, and after pruning opens limbs to sun · Stone fruit and cherries, apples, pears, figs, persimmons, pomegranates · Zones 9, 10

† Timing only. Follow your state or provincial extension's home-orchard spray guide and the product label.

Sources: University of Minnesota; University of Saskatchewan; University of Georgia Extension and 15 more (full list at the web address on the left)

Data as of 15 Nov 2026