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May Orchard Checklist

The May 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

- ☐ Hang yellow sticky traps for cherry fruit fly
  Just after bloom, as fruit starts to develop · Cherries · Bearing trees · Zones 4, 5
- ☐ Plant potted trees after the last frost
  After the last spring frost · New trees
- ☐ Water deeply during dry spells
  Growing season, in dry weeks
- ☐ Keep a weed-free circle around young trees
  Growing season · Young trees
- ☐ Keep insecticides off trees in bloom
  Bloom · Bearing trees
- ☐ Remove winter trunk wraps in spring
  After the last spring frost · Young trees
- ☐ Loosen ties and guards as trunks grow
  Late spring · Young trees
- ☐ Spread young branches just after bud break
  Just after bud break in spring · Apples · Young trees
- ☐ Apple scab window, green tip to petal fall †
  Green tip to petal fall, ahead of rain · Apples · Bearing trees
- ☐ Scout for pests as buds turn pink
  Pink bud · Apples · Bearing trees
- ☐ Hang codling moth traps by first bloom
  By first bloom · Apples, pears · Bearing trees
- ☐ Check trunk bases for borers
  During bloom · Apples
- ☐ Plum curculio window opens at petal fall †
  Petal fall and the following three weeks · Apples · Bearing trees · Zones 4, 5
- ☐ Cut out fire blight strikes promptly
  The month after bloom, and whenever strikes appear · Apples, pears · Zones 4, 5
- ☐ Thin apples to one per cluster
  Two to six weeks after bloom · Apples · Bearing trees · Zone 5 only
- ☐ Thin heavy pear crops early
  Within four weeks after bloom · Pears · Bearing trees · Zones 4, 5
- ☐ Choose scaffold branches during the first summer
  First summer, through mid-summer · Stone fruit · Young trees · Zones 4, 5
- ☐ Watch for plum curculio after petal fall
  Petal fall and the weeks after · Stone fruit · Bearing trees · Zones 4, 5

Middle zones 6–7

- ☐ Hang yellow sticky traps for cherry fruit fly
  Just after bloom, as fruit starts to develop · Cherries · Bearing trees
- ☐ Keep figs mulched and watered through summer
  Summer, ahead of and during ripening · Figs · Zone 7 only
- ☐ Keep insecticides off trees in bloom
  Bloom · Bearing trees · Zone 6 only
- ☐ Thin heavy persimmon crops to 6 inches
  About three weeks to a month after bloom · Persimmons · Bearing trees · Zone 7 only
- ☐ Pinch out shoots competing with the leader
  Early summer, while shoots are soft · Apples · Young trees
- ☐ Rub off water sprouts in early summer
  Late spring to early summer · Apples · Bearing trees · Zone 7 only
- ☐ Check trunk bases for borers
  During bloom · Apples · Zone 6 only
- ☐ Plum curculio window opens at petal fall †
  Petal fall and the following three weeks · Apples · Bearing trees
- ☐ Cut out fire blight strikes promptly
  The month after bloom, and whenever strikes appear · Apples, pears
- ☐ Thin apples to one per cluster
  Two to six weeks after bloom · Apples · Bearing trees
- ☐ Thin heavy pear crops early
  Within four weeks after bloom · Pears · Bearing trees
- ☐ Choose scaffold branches during the first summer
  First summer, through mid-summer · Stone fruit · Young trees
- ☐ Thin peaches to 6 to 8 inches apart
  Within about six weeks after bloom · Peaches, nectarines · Bearing trees
- ☐ Thin apricots to 4 to 6 inches
  Four to six weeks after full bloom · Apricots · Bearing trees · Zone 7 only
- ☐ Watch for plum curculio after petal fall
  Petal fall and the weeks after · Stone fruit · Bearing trees
- ☐ Pick peaches when flesh yields to thumb pressure
  North Carolina: late May to August · Peaches, nectarines · Bearing trees · Zone 7 only

Warm zones 8–10

- ☐ Collect fallen cherries as fruit ripens
  As fruit ripens · Cherries · Bearing trees · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Pick sweet cherries when colored and sweet
  Early summer, as the fruit colors · Sweet cherries · Bearing trees · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Give bearing citrus a second feeding
  May to June · Citrus · Bearing trees · Zones 9, 10
- ☐ Prune freeze damage after spring regrowth shows
  May to June, after a damaging freeze · Citrus · Zones 9, 10
- ☐ Prop or lighten limbs bowing under fruit
  As the fruit sizes, through summer · Stone fruit, apples, pears, persimmons · Bearing trees · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Expect some fruit drop after bloom
  Late spring into summer, after bloom · Persimmons · Bearing trees · Zone 9 only
- ☐ Pick peaches when flesh yields to thumb pressure
  North Carolina: late May to August · Peaches, nectarines · Bearing trees · Zone 8 only
- ☐ Prune peaches and plums again after harvest
  After harvest, May to August · Peaches, nectarines, plums · Bearing trees · Zones 9, 10
- ☐ Pick apricots slightly soft, late May to June
  Late May to early June (Arizona low desert) · Apricots · Bearing trees · Zone 9 only
- ☐ Pick peaches and nectarines firm ripe
  Florida: mid-March to mid-May; Arizona low desert: late April to May · continues
- ☐ Pick plums as they start to soften
  Florida: April and May · continues

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

Sources: University of Saskatchewan; Iowa State University Extension and Outreach; University of Minnesota and 17 more (full list at the web address on the left)

Data as of 15 Nov 2026