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Zone 8 Fruit Tree Care Calendar

Months are typical for zone 8 (worked out from a representative location with average frosts Mar 8 and Dec 1). Shift them by your local frost dates and by what your trees are doing.

For apples, pears, peaches, nectarines, plums, sweet cherries, tart cherries, apricots, figs, persimmons and pomegranates. Only one or two varieties of citrus are rated a good fit here, so they have no tasks on this sheet. Check off each job as you do it; small print under a month lists short jobs still running from earlier.

All season, once started

ALL TREES

Water new trees on a schedule (Jan–Nov)

Water deeply during dry spells (Feb–Nov)

FIGS

Keep figs mulched and watered through summer (Apr–Oct)

Pick figs when necks wilt and fruit droops (Aug–Nov)

Watch ripening figs for souring (Aug–Nov)

PEACHES, NECTARINES

Pick peaches when flesh yields to thumb pressure (May–Aug)

January

31 JOBS

- ☐ Prune persimmons lightly in winter — Persimmons · Bearing trees
- ☐ Train young persimmons to a pyramid — Persimmons · Young trees
- ☐ Prune cherries in late winter, after hard cold — Cherries
- ☐ Prune in late winter, before bloom — Apples, pears
- ☐ Train young trees to a central leader — Apples, pears · Young trees
- ☐ Cut off root suckers and water sprouts — Apples
- ☐ Choose three to eight leaders for a bush — Figs · Young trees
- ☐ Prune figs lightly before growth begins — Figs
- ☐ Prune pomegranates lightly before spring growth — Pomegranates
- ☐ Choose trunks while the plant is young — Pomegranates · Young trees
- ☐ Prune stone fruit in late winter, near bloom — Stone fruit
- ☐ Dormant oil window, if persimmon scale is a problem † — Persimmons
- ☐ Check bare-root trees the day they arrive — New trees
- ☐ Plant bare-root trees before growth begins — Stone fruit and cherries, apples, pears, persimmons, pomegranates · New trees
- ☐ Put a white trunk guard on — New trees
- ☐ Water new trees on a schedule — New trees
- ☐ Head back the new tree at planting — Apples, pears · New trees
- ☐ Cut back new stone fruit trees at planting — Stone fruit · New trees

Still going: Clean and disinfect pruners when cutting diseased wood; Remove fire blight cankers while dormant; Prune out black knot galls in late winter; Test the planting site's soil; Water figs a few days before hard freezes; Rake up and remove fallen fig leaves; Protect figs with mounded mulch in late fall; Plant dormant trees in late fall; Cut grass short around young trees; Fit hardware-cloth guards against mice and rabbits; Rake up and destroy fallen leaves; Rake up fallen leaves and fruit; Peach leaf curl treatment window after leaf fall

February

30 JOBS

- ☐ Plant figs in spring, deeper than before — Figs · New trees
- ☐ Feed figs lightly, or not at all — Figs
- ☐ Remove first-year stakes the next spring — Stone fruit and cherries, pears, figs, persimmons, pomegranates · Young trees
- ☐ Remove first-year stakes, except on dwarf apples — Apples · Young trees
- ☐ Dormant oil window, if mites or scale were a problem † — Apples, pears · Bearing trees
- ☐ Dormant oil window, if San Jose scale is a problem † — Apricots
- ☐ Feed weak trees a month before bloom
- ☐ Water deeply during dry spells
- ☐ Spread young branches just after bud break — Apples · Young trees
- ☐ Apple scab window, green tip to petal fall † — Apples · Bearing trees

Still going: Clean and disinfect pruners when cutting diseased wood; Remove fire blight cankers while dormant; Prune persimmons lightly in winter; Train young persimmons to a pyramid; Prune cherries in late winter, after hard cold; Prune in late winter, before bloom; Train young trees to a central leader; Cut off root suckers and water sprouts; Choose three to eight leaders for a bush; Prune figs lightly before growth begins; Prune pomegranates lightly before spring growth; Choose trunks while the plant is young; Prune stone fruit in late winter, near bloom; Dormant oil window, if persimmon scale is a problem; Check bare-root trees the day they arrive; Plant bare-root trees before growth begins; Put a white trunk guard on; Head back the new tree at planting; Cut back new stone fruit trees at planting; Water figs a few days before hard freezes

March

18 JOBS

- ☐ Check stems and cut out winter-killed wood — Figs
- ☐ Head back last year's growth for branching — Figs
- ☐ Remove winter covers after spring frost danger — Figs
- ☐ Keep a weed-free circle around young trees — Young trees
- ☐ Loosen ties and guards as trunks grow — Young trees
- ☐ Keep insecticides off trees in bloom — Bearing trees
- ☐ Scout for pests as buds turn pink — Apples · Bearing trees
- ☐ Hang codling moth traps by first bloom — Apples, pears · Bearing trees
- ☐ Check trunk bases for borers — Apples
- ☐ Choose scaffold branches during the first summer — Stone fruit · Young trees

Still going: Prune in late winter, before bloom; Prune stone fruit in late winter, near bloom; Put a white trunk guard on; Plant figs in spring, deeper than before; Remove first-year stakes the next spring; Remove first-year stakes, except on dwarf apples; Spread young branches just after bud break; Apple scab window, green tip to petal fall

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

Sources: Iowa State University Extension and Outreach; Oregon State University Extension Service; University of Saskatchewan and 19 more (full list at the web address on the left)

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April

17 JOBS

- ☐ Hang yellow sticky traps for cherry fruit fly — Cherries · Bearing trees
- ☐ Expect some fruit drop after bloom — Persimmons · Bearing trees
- ☐ Plum curculio window opens at petal fall † — Apples · Bearing trees
- ☐ Cut out fire blight strikes promptly — Apples, pears
- ☐ Thin heavy pear crops early — Pears · Bearing trees
- ☐ Watch for plum curculio after petal fall — Stone fruit · Bearing trees
- ☐ Water at the ground, not overhead, in bloom — Pomegranates · Bearing trees
- ☐ Thin apples to one per cluster — Apples · Bearing trees
- ☐ Thin heavy persimmon crops to 6 inches — Persimmons · Bearing trees
- ☐ Pinch out shoots competing with the leader — Apples · Young trees
- ☐ Thin peaches to 6 to 8 inches apart — Peaches, nectarines · Bearing trees
- ☐ Keep figs mulched and watered through summer — Figs
- ☐ Rub off water sprouts in early summer — Apples · Bearing trees
- ☐ Thin apricots to 4 to 6 inches — Apricots · Bearing trees

Still going: Put a white trunk guard on; Keep a weed-free circle around young trees; Choose scaffold branches during the first summer

May

9 JOBS

- ☐ Collect fallen cherries as fruit ripens — Cherries · Bearing trees
- ☐ Pick sweet cherries when colored and sweet — Sweet cherries · Bearing trees
- ☐ Pick peaches when flesh yields to thumb pressure — Peaches, nectarines · Bearing trees · North Carolina
- ☐ Prop or lighten limbs bowing under fruit — Stone fruit, apples, pears, persimmons · Bearing trees

Still going: Choose scaffold branches during the first summer; Expect some fruit drop after bloom; Water at the ground, not overhead, in bloom; Pinch out shoots competing with the leader; Rub off water sprouts in early summer

June

7 JOBS

- ☐ Note the early breba crop in June — Figs · Bearing trees
- ☐ Remove unwanted suckers in mid-summer — Pomegranates

Still going: Water at the ground, not overhead, in bloom; Rub off water sprouts in early summer; Collect fallen cherries as fruit ripens; Pick sweet cherries when colored and sweet; Prop or lighten limbs bowing under fruit

July

10 JOBS

- ☐ Pick apples as the ground color turns — Apples · Bearing trees
- ☐ Pick European pears mature but unripe — Pears · Bearing trees
- ☐ Chill the harvest quickly and keep it humid — Apples, pears · Bearing trees
- ☐ Pick tart cherries when soft and full-flavored — Tart cherries · Bearing trees
- ☐ Cut vigorous shoots from the peach tree's center — Peaches, nectarines · Bearing trees
- ☐ Pick plums as they soften, July to August — Plums · Bearing trees
- ☐ Pick apricots slightly soft, July to August — Apricots · Bearing trees

Still going: Prop or lighten limbs bowing under fruit; Note the early breba crop in June; Remove unwanted suckers in mid-summer

August

11 JOBS

- ☐ Keep watering even to prevent fruit splitting — Pomegranates · Bearing trees
- ☐ Skip nitrogen in late summer and early fall — Pomegranates
- ☐ Pick figs when necks wilt and fruit droops — Figs · Bearing trees
- ☐ Watch ripening figs for souring — Figs · Bearing trees
- ☐ Pick pomegranates that ring when tapped — Pomegranates · Bearing trees

Still going: Remove unwanted suckers in mid-summer; Pick apples as the ground color turns; Pick European pears mature but unripe; Chill the harvest quickly and keep it humid; Pick plums as they soften, July to August; Pick apricots slightly soft, July to August

September

6 JOBS

- ☐ Skip late-summer feeding that pushes tender growth — Figs

Still going: Pick apples as the ground color turns; Chill the harvest quickly and keep it humid; Keep watering even to prevent fruit splitting; Skip nitrogen in late summer and early fall; Pick pomegranates that ring when tapped

October

8 JOBS

- ☐ Test the planting site's soil — New trees
- ☐ Plant container trees, ideally in fall — New trees
- ☐ Pick persimmons by type, before hard frost — Persimmons · Bearing trees
- ☐ Paint bark white where frost damages it — Pomegranates

Still going: Keep watering even to prevent fruit splitting; Skip nitrogen in late summer and early fall; Pick pomegranates that ring when tapped; Skip late-summer feeding that pushes tender growth

November

7 JOBS

- ☐ Order trees for spring planting — New trees
- ☐ Remove mummies, fallen fruit and dead twigs — Stone fruit and cherries · Bearing trees

Still going: Pick pomegranates that ring when tapped; Test the planting site's soil; Plant container trees, ideally in fall; Pick persimmons by type, before hard frost; Paint bark white where frost damages it

December

17 JOBS

- ☐ Clean and disinfect pruners when cutting diseased wood
- ☐ Remove fire blight cankers while dormant — Apples, pears
- ☐ Prune out black knot galls in late winter — Cherries, plums
- ☐ Water figs a few days before hard freezes — Figs
- ☐ Move potted figs into a cool, dark shelter — Figs
- ☐ Rake up and remove fallen fig leaves — Figs
- ☐ Protect figs with mounded mulch in late fall — Figs
- ☐ Plant dormant trees in late fall — New trees
- ☐ Cut grass short around young trees — Young trees
- ☐ Fit hardware-cloth guards against mice and rabbits — Young trees
- ☐ Rake up and destroy fallen leaves — Pears, persimmons
- ☐ Rake up fallen leaves and fruit — Apples
- ☐ Peach leaf curl treatment window after leaf fall † — Peaches, nectarines

Still going: Test the planting site's soil; Plant container trees, ideally in fall; Pick persimmons by type, before hard frost; Remove mummies, fallen fruit and dead twigs

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

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