

# Pruning Fruit Trees, Winter or Summer, with Rico Montenegro

By Jennifer  
Jewell



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Winter in the garden involves - or is supposed to involve - a lot of pruning. In January of 2010, I recorded an interview with horticulturist and arborist Rico Montenegro, working with the [Fruit Tree Planting Foundation](#), about the pruning of the historic apple trees at the Camden House historic site near Whiskey Town lake. Much of this essay is excerpted from that post. This January, Rico recorded an *In a North State Garden* segment with me on pruning of fruit trees in general - the whys and wherefores.

**Photo above:** The historic Camden House at Whiskeytown Recreation area seen through a shroud of 100 - 150 year old 'Lady' apple tree branches.



I don't know about you, but pruning can be a tricky task for me. As an enthusiastic and long-time gardener, I know that I **should** prune my fruit trees and vines every year – for form, for production and in many cases for the long-term health and life of my plants. But some years, the task seems more troubling than others: I diligently study the sketches and graphs in the books and articles, I even take the diagrams out to my trees. I look at the book, I look at the tree. I look back at the book. Hmm. Sometimes the tree looks so differently than the book's sketch that I am just not sure. Other times the tree looks great – so why prune? I have been known in gardens and seasons past to look one final time at the book, shake my head and take my book, my clippers and my intimidation back into the house for another time/season/year. **Photo:** Rico

Montenegro discussing the growth of one of the old apple trees at the Camden House site.



This year my inspiration to confidently approach my trees and give them the love and attention they need *right now* in their dormant winter months was the result of a late December day I spent walking around the historic [Camden House orchards in Whiskeytown](#) with consulting horticulturist and arborist, Rico Montenegro. **Photo:** The hollowed out but restored and living 'Bullock Sheepnose' apple tree near one of the barns at the Camden House site.

### Rico Montenegro:

Rico is based in Anderson, California and is a long-time horticulturist and arborist. He is currently the arborist for the [Fruit Tree Planting Foundation](#), a non-profit charitable organization based in San Francisco and “dedicated to planting edible, fruitful trees and plants to benefit the environment and all its inhabitants and to encourage their growth under organic standards.” **Photo:** Rico Montenegro.

Having taken his degree in horticulture from Cal Poly, and done his graduate work in horticulture and botany at the University of Minnesota, Rico then went on to work at such illustrious institutions as the Huntington Botanical Gardens, and California State Fullerton's [Fullerton Arboretum](#).

In 1998 Rico was recruited to the North State to work as the Curator for the [McConnell Arboretum and Gardens at Turtle Bay](#). He and his family have lived and worked in the region ever since. While working with Turtle Bay, Rico also began teaching classes at Shasta College and with the help of then Federal Botanist Gretchen Ring, he was able to bring some of his classes to see the old fruit trees at the historic Camden House site. Since taking his first class to see the site some 8 or 9 years ago, Rico was hooked and has been personally committed to saving the old trees and restoring them to production if at all possible.

### Rico's Pruning Tips:

#### PRUNING YOUNG TREES

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Proper pruning is essential in developing a tree with a strong structure and desirable form. Trees that receive the appropriate pruning measures while they are young will require little corrective pruning when they mature.

#### Keep these few simple principles in mind before pruning a tree:

Each cut has the potential to change the growth of the tree. Always have a purpose in mind before making a cut.

Proper technique is essential. Poor pruning can cause damage that lasts for the life of the tree. Learn where and how to make the cuts before picking up the pruning shears.

Trees do not heal the way people do. When a tree is wounded, it must grow over and compartmentalize the wound. As a result, the wound is contained within the tree forever.

Small cuts do less damage to the tree than large cuts. For that reason, proper pruning (training) of young trees is critical. Waiting to prune a tree until it is mature can create the need for large cuts that the tree cannot easily close.





## **Making The Cut**

Where you make a pruning cut is critical to a tree's response in growth and wound closure. Make pruning cuts just outside the branch collar. Because the branch collar contains trunk or parent branch tissues, the tree will be damaged unnecessarily if you remove or damage it. In fact, if the cut is large, the tree may suffer permanent internal decay from an improper pruning cut.

If a permanent branch is to be shortened, cut it back to a lateral branch or bud. Internodal cuts, or cuts made between buds or branches, may lead to stem decay, sprout production, and misdirected growth.

## **Pruning Tools**

When pruning trees, it is important to have the right tool for the job. For small trees, most of the cuts can be made with hand pruning shears (secateurs). The scissor-type, or bypass blade hand pruners, are preferred over the anvil type. They make cleaner, more accurate cuts. Cuts larger than one-half inch in diameter should be made with lopping shears or a pruning saw.

Never use hedge shears to prune a tree. Whatever tool you use, make sure it is kept clean and sharp.

## **Establishing a Strong Scaffold Structure**

A good structure of primary scaffold branches should be established while the tree is young. The scaffold branches provide the framework of the mature tree. Properly trained young trees will develop a strong structure that requires less corrective pruning as they mature.

The goal in training young trees is to establish a strong trunk with sturdy, well-spaced branches. The strength of the branch structure depends on the relative sizes of the branches, the branch angles, and the spacing of the limbs. Naturally, those factors vary with the growth habit of the tree. Pin oaks and sweetgums, for example, have a conical shape with a central leader. Elms and live oaks are often wide-spreading without a central leader. Other trees, such as lindens and Bradford pears, are densely branched. Good pruning techniques remove structurally weak branches while maintaining the natural form of the tree.

## **Trunk Development**

For most young trees, maintain a single dominant leader. Do not prune back the tip of this leader. Do not allow secondary branches to outgrow the leader. Sometimes a tree will develop double leaders known as co-dominant stems. Co-dominant stems can lead to structural weaknesses, so it is best to remove one of the stems while the tree is young.

The lateral branches contribute to the development of a sturdy well-tapered trunk. It is important to leave some of these lateral branches in place, even though they may be pruned out later. These branches, known as temporary branches, also help protect the trunk from sun and mechanical injury. Temporary branches should be kept short enough not to be an obstruction or compete with selected permanent branches.

## **Permanent Branch Selection**

Nursery trees often have low branches that may make the tree appear well-proportioned when young, but low branches are seldom appropriate for large-growing trees in an urban environment. How a young tree is trained depends on its primary function in the landscape. For example, street trees must be pruned so that they allow at least 16 feet of clearance for traffic. Most landscape trees require only about 8 feet of clearance.

The height of the lowest permanent branch is determined by the tree's intended function and location in the landscape. Trees that are used to screen an unsightly view or provide a wind break may be allowed to branch low to the ground. Most large-growing trees in the landscape must eventually be pruned to allow head clearance.

The spacing of branches, both vertically and radially, in the tree is very important. Branches selected as permanent scaffold branches must be well-spaced along the trunk. Maintain radial balance with branches growing outward in each direction.

A good rule of thumb for the vertical spacing of permanent branches is to maintain a distance equal to 3 percent of the tree's eventual height. Thus, a tree that will be 50 feet tall should have permanent scaffold branches spaced about 18 inches apart along the trunk. Avoid allowing two scaffold branches to arise one above the other on the same side of the tree.

Some trees have a tendency to develop branches with narrow angles of attachment and tight crotches. As the tree grows, bark can become enclosed deep within the crotch between the branch and the trunk. Such growth is called included bark. Included bark weakens the attachment of the branch to the trunk and can lead to branch failure when the tree matures. You should prune branches with weak attachments while they are young.

Avoid overthinning the interior of the tree. The leaves of each branch must manufacture enough food to keep that branch alive and growing. In addition, each branch must contribute food to grow and feed the trunk and roots. Removal of too many leaves can starve the tree, reduce growth, and make the tree unhealthy. A good rule of thumb is to maintain at least half the foliage on branches arising in the lower two-thirds of the tree.

### **Newly Planted Trees**

Pruning of newly planted trees should be limited to corrective pruning. Remove torn or broken branches, and save other pruning measures for the second or third year.

The belief that trees should be pruned when planted to compensate for root loss is misguided. Trees need their leaves and shoot tips to provide food and the substances that stimulate new root production. Unpruned trees establish faster with a stronger root system than trees pruned at the time of planting.

### **PRUNING MATURE TREES**

Pruning is the most common tree maintenance procedure. Although forest trees grow quite well with only nature's pruning, landscape trees require a higher level of care to maintain their safety and aesthetics. Pruning should be done with an understanding of how the tree responds to each cut. Improper pruning can cause damage that will last for the life of the tree, or worse, shorten the tree's life.

### **Reasons for Pruning**

Because each cut has the potential to change the growth of the tree, no branch should be removed without a reason. Common reasons for pruning are to remove dead branches, to remove crowded or rubbing limbs, and to eliminate hazards. Trees may also be pruned to increase light and air penetration to the inside of the tree's crown or to the landscape below. In most cases, mature trees are pruned as a corrective or preventive measure.

Routine thinning does not necessarily improve the health of a tree. Trees produce a dense crown of leaves to manufacture the sugar used as energy for growth and development. Removal of foliage through pruning can reduce growth and stored energy reserves. Heavy pruning can be a significant health stress for the tree.

Yet if people and trees are to coexist in an urban or suburban environment, then we sometimes have to modify the trees. City environments do not mimic natural forest conditions. Safety is a major concern. Also, we want trees to complement other landscape plantings and lawns. Proper pruning, with an understanding of tree biology, can maintain good tree health and structure while enhancing the aesthetic and economic values of our landscapes.

### **When to Prune**

Most routine pruning to remove weak, diseased, or dead limbs can be accomplished at any time during the year with little effect on the tree. As a rule, growth is maximized and wound closure is fastest if pruning takes place before the spring growth flush. Some trees, such as maples and birches, tend to bleed if pruned early in the spring. It may be unsightly, but it is of little consequence to the tree.

A few tree diseases, such as oak wilt, can be spread when pruning wounds allow spores access into the tree. Susceptible trees should not be pruned during active transmission periods.

Heavy pruning just after the spring growth flush should be avoided. At that time, trees have just expended a great deal of energy to produce foliage and early shoot growth. Removal of a large percentage of foliage at that time can stress the tree.

### **Making Proper Pruning Cuts**

Pruning cuts should be made just outside the branch collar. The branch collar contains trunk or parent branch tissue and should not be damaged or removed. If the trunk collar has grown out on a dead limb to be removed, make the cut just beyond the collar. Do not cut the collar.

If a large limb is to be removed, its weight should first be reduced. This is done by making an undercut about 12 to 18 inches from the limb point of attachment. Make a second cut from the top, directly above or a few inches farther out on the limb. Doing so removes the limb, leaving the 12- to 18-inch stub. Remove the stub by cutting back to the branch collar. This technique reduces the possibility of tearing the bark.

## Pruning Techniques

Specific types of pruning may be necessary to maintain a mature tree in a healthy, safe, and attractive condition.

Cleaning is the removal of dead, dying, diseased, crowded, weakly attached and low-vigor branches from the crown of a tree.

Thinning is the selective removal of branches to increase light penetration and air movement through the crown. Thinning opens the foliage of a tree, reduces weight on heavy limbs, and helps retain the tree's natural shape.

Raising removes the lower branches from a tree in order to provide clearance for buildings, vehicles, pedestrians, and vistas.

Reduction reduces the size of a tree, often for clearance for utility lines. Reducing the height or spread of a tree is best accomplished by pruning back the leaders and branch terminals to lateral branches that are large enough to assume the terminal roles (at least one-third the diameter of the cut stem). Compared to topping, reduction helps maintain the form and structural integrity of the tree.

## How Much Should Be Pruned?

The amount of live tissue that should be removed depends on the tree size, species, and age, as well as the pruning objectives. Younger trees tolerate the removal of a higher percentage of living tissue better than mature trees do. An important principle to remember is that a tree can recover from several small pruning wounds faster than from one large wound.

A common mistake is to remove too much inner foliage and small branches. It is important to maintain an even distribution of foliage along large limbs and in the lower portion of the crown. Over thinning reduces the tree's sugar production capacity and can create tip-heavy limbs that are prone to failure.

Mature trees should require little routine pruning. A widely accepted rule of thumb is never to remove more than one-quarter of a tree's leaf-bearing crown. In a mature tree, pruning even that much could have negative effects. Removing even a single, large-diameter limb can create a wound that the tree may not be able to close. The older and larger a tree becomes, the less energy it has in reserve to close wounds and defend against decay or insect attack. The pruning of large mature trees is usually limited to removal of dead or potentially hazardous limbs.

## Historic Camden House and Orchards, Whiskeytown:

The Camden House site sits at the confluence of two small creeks in a protected valley at about 1000 feet in elevation along the north side of Whiskeytown Lake. The house and its outbuildings were once a hotel, stagecoach-stop and waypoint for travelers on the toll road to Weaverville and then on to the coast. The 100 – 150 year-old gnarled trees that dot the landscape around the historic circa-1850s buildings and trails are full of their own personalities and life stories. And on a cold damp winter's day, they even hold vestiges of their most recent crop. **Photo:** A shapely apple tree on the side of the Camden House. With the help of other volunteers and staff of the Parks Department, Rico began his restoration on the Camden House apple trees by focusing on those trees nearest to the big house. Over the years, the restoration work has continued to trees in outlying areas. In 2010, Rico hopes to get to trees near another historic house on the site.

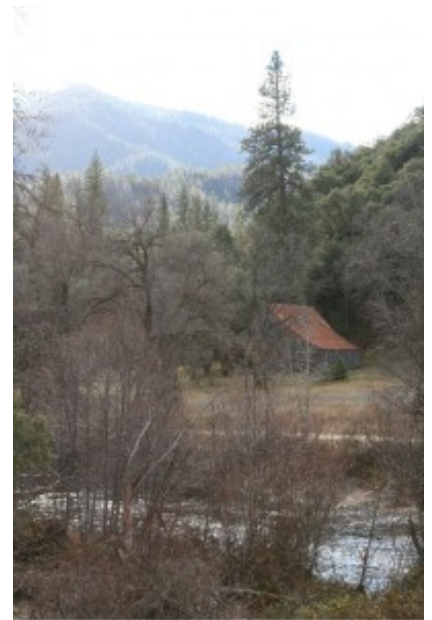




Apple trees are some of the longest-lived fruit trees known and have been recorded to live 200 years or more. The long life and resilience – maybe even stubbornness - of these Whiskeytown trees is what inspired me to take more seriously the pruning of the young trees in my garden. I won't be around to see my trees produce fruit when they are 150 years old, but wherever I am, I will be pretty proud if I prepared them to do just that. Pruning your fruit trees is – like most gardening – an act of hope and faith. **Photo:** One of the Camden House apple trees still loaded with now-frozen fruit in late-December.



Where once 100s of trees blanketed the Camden House site and valley, now just a few dozen of the original trees are scattered around. Some of the trees are hanging on by just a thread, or to be more exact, by just a few inches of bark and cambium left on one side of an otherwise hollowed out trunk. Rico and the many students, volunteers and the National and State Park workers who have helped him over the years have had their work cut out for them. **Photo:** Looking down the valley of the Camden House site - once apple trees blanketed the field in front of this barn, now just a few remain here and there.



Pardon the pun, but their work has literally been the systematic pruning of these trees year after year to remove overgrowth, to restore proper shape and balance, to control and if possible eradicate diseases such as fire blight, and to restore fruiting wood. **Photo:** The gnarled aspect of one of the old trees.

“Restoring old and sometimes badly abused fruit trees differs slightly from pruning young trees,” Rico tells me. “With young tree pruning you are hoping to train the tree into a strong and shapely form for the future. With old trees, you are working with what you have.”

If you are able to prune your young trees well, you may never need to know how to restore an old tree because you will have set the foundation for good growth and tree formation. But many people inherit old trees with their houses and gardens and so restorative pruning techniques are good to know – you may just need them yet.

Rico began his work on the Camden House trees by focusing on the ones in front of the Camden House itself. His challenges included uncovering the trees from shrouds of vinca and Himalayan blackberry; assessing each tree's health and potential viability; and beginning the pruning strategy. Because the trees have seen such indecencies as being topped by chainsaws, girdled by deer, climbed and broken by very large and hungry bears and/or humans, and then left to fend for themselves for years, Rico started slowly with not-too-drastic cuts that build upon each other year to year. **Photo:** Looking back at the Camden House through apple trees both original and more recently planted in an effort to ensure the genetic survival of the Camden House apple tree varieties.



“Like most pruning, you start by removing dead or diseased wood and then you look at the shape of the tree you've got. You never want to ‘top’ a tree – even if its top is badly overgrown and out of balance with the rest of the tree. If you need to bring a tree's height back down and to remove some of the weight and overgrowth of the canopy, you remove a little – maybe a third or so - of each branch tip or side shoot each year,” Rico explained as we walked around the orchard. “Your clippers need to be sharp and clean and you'll want to make your cut about a



45 degree angle just above a bud on the branch –with the cut angling away from the bud." **Photo:** Rico Montenegro demonstrates pruning technique. Left: the branch ends Rico will cut back to encourage strong growth and fruit. Right: Pruning the tips back to strong, outward facing buds. Below: The same branch tips now pruned.

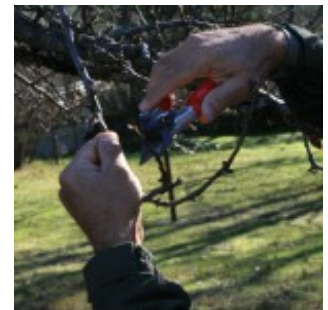
Because the parks department does not allow for chemical spraying on the site, Rico, who is an almost-solely organic gardener by nature and does not recommend pruning unless you have a problem, has had to fight extreme fire blight damage on the old trees completely through rigorous pruning each year. This is one reason he is diligent about clean tools, and when he is working with known or potential fire blight he actually cleans his clippers with a 10% bleach solution water spray between each cut. Rico cautions "Never compost your clippings from a tree that has or even possibly has fire blight. In my opinion, burning these is the best method for disposing of them, but you could also put them with your household trash.

Rico led me and my visiting aunt, Diana Bingham, a former sheep farmer and small orchard owner in Vermont, around the Camden House historic Orchards for several hours. He showed us the progress that has been made at identifying and cataloguing the original tree varieties and dates. He showed us the new orchard that has been established from cuttings taken by Whiskeytown Recreation Area staff from the original trees, which were then grafted and grown on by a commercial nursery and then shipped back to the site to be planted out. "This way, if we do lose one of the trees, we still have the genetic stock," he explained. He demonstrated how he will approach pruning the trees this January and February. He showed us the set of original trees up the trail from the house and toward the old cemetery on the way to the next homestead he is hoping to focus on this coming year. "Each year we save a few more. Each year a few more flower in the spring and produce fruit come summer. It's very gratifying." **Photo:** A young tree grown on from a cutting taken from one of the old trees. The young trees are caged to protect them from deer and bear; their trunks are painted white to prevent sunscald, which can cause young bark to crack and encourage pest issues; they're also mulched heavily to retain even moisture in the ground around them, but workers are careful to not have mulch directly against the young tree's bark or crown, which could trap too much moisture and eventually cause rot.

As a visitor, it's certainly gratifying to see and to be in the presence of these trees and the man who continues to oversee their care. It is inspirational to consider the history they have witnessed and their continued legacy. My little home garden now has some long-life aspirations. **Photo:** The parks department staff has worked diligently to identify, label and catalogue the surviving trees at the Camden House site.

### Visiting the Camden House site and Orchards:

The Camden House site is part of the Whiskeytown recreational area. Two parking lots, which require a recreation area season- or day-long parking-pass, are available to access the site and both are right off of HWY 299/Eureka Way. The site is open all year and special events and house tours are seasonally offered. The orchards are always accessible, and fruit is free for





the picking according to Rico, the park simply asks that the trees not be climbed, roughly handled or otherwise damaged. **Photo:** Old apple tree branches against snow capped mountains above Whiskeytown Lake.

**For more information on visiting and upcoming events, the contact info is:**

[www.nps.gov/whis/](http://www.nps.gov/whis/)  
14412 Kennedy Memorial Dr  
P.O. Box 188  
Whiskeytown, CA 96095  
(530) 246-1225

### **Upcoming regional Pruning Classes:**

**Photo:** Old trees being restored present an arborist with some unique challenges - here a twisted and hollowed out trunk.

Pruning is perhaps best learned in a hands- on demonstration setting, and you have ample opportunity to learn pruning skills from experts around the region in the coming months. Here are some of the pruning classes I have listed in the [Calendar of Regional Gardening Events](#):

**January 22 – Fair Oaks: Fair Oaks Horticulture Center:** 9 am - noon. Sacramento Master Gardeners' Workshop on what to consider when selecting and caring for berries. How to prune grapes and fruit trees. Maintaining ornamental grasses. Fair Oaks Horticulture Center is in Fair Oaks Park. Questions? Call 916-875-6913, or go to [http://groups.ucanr.org/sactomg/Fair\\_Oaks\\_Horticulture\\_Center/](http://groups.ucanr.org/sactomg/Fair_Oaks_Horticulture_Center/)

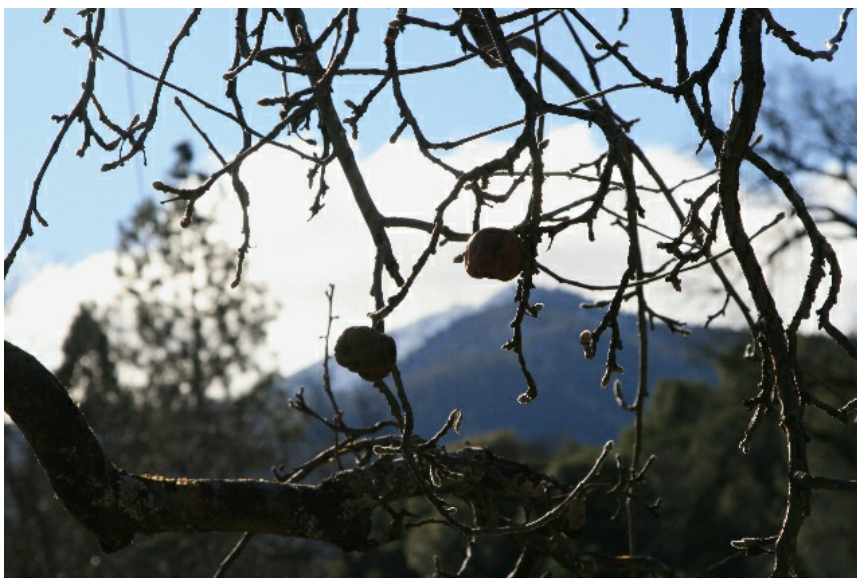
**January 22 – Redding: Wyntour Gardens: Fruit Tree Pruning Classes** 10 am & 1 pm All classes are free, class size is limited, please call to reserve your seat: 530-365-2256. 8026 Airport Road Redding, CA. For more information: [www.wyntourgardens.com](http://www.wyntourgardens.com)

**January 29 – Redding: Wyntour Gardens: Fruit Tree Pruning Classes** 10 am & 1 pm All classes are free, class size is limited, please call to reserve your seat: 530-365-2256. 8026 Airport Road Redding, CA. For more information: [www.wyntourgardens.com](http://www.wyntourgardens.com)

**January 30 - Anderson: Happy Valley Nursery - Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop** 1pm - 3 pm. 6876 Happy Valley Road Anderson, CA. Learn the basics of fruit tree cultivation and pruning techniques from local certified arborist and horticulturist for the Fruit Tree Planting Foundation. Presenter: Rico Montenegro. For More information or to RSVP: (530) 365-6924

**February 5 – Redding: Wyntour Gardens: Grape Vine Pruning Classes** 11 am. All classes are free, class size is limited, please call to reserve your seat: 530-365-2256. 8026 Airport Road Redding, CA. For more information: [www.wyntourgardens.com](http://www.wyntourgardens.com)

**February 5 - Redding: Shasta College Community Teaching Garden - Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop** 1pm - 3 pm.





Room 812, Shasta College Main Campus. Learn the basics of fruit tree cultivation and pruning techniques from local certified arborist and horticulturist for the Fruit Tree Planting Foundation. Presenter: Rico Montenegro. Fee: \$15.00 For more information: <http://www.shastacollege.edu/teachingarden/>

**February 12 – Redding: McConnell Arboretum & Botanical Gardens at Turtle Bay: Trees in the Landscape Series: Homeowner's Guide to Tree Care**

10 am - Noon. Trees are usually the largest and oldest plants in a landscape. Providing beauty and shade, they are also undoubtedly important investments of time and money for homeowners. In this class, Turtle Bay's Lead Gardener, (and a News Café's "Tree Goddess" columnist), Marie Stadther, co-teaches with local IPM (integrated pest management) expert, Paul Stockton, about tree selection, correct planting, pruning, disease control, and care of older trees. Free with Park or Garden admission. Meet at West Garden Entrance. Take N. Market Street, turn on Arboretum Drive. Take the right fork. Parking lot and entrance are on the left. More info: 530-242-3178 or [www.turtlebay.org/nursery](http://www.turtlebay.org/nursery)



**February 12 - Whiskeytown: Camden House Historic Site and Orchards - Advanced Pruning Workshop on Restoration of Mature Trees**

10 am - 11 am. Restoration Workshop for fruit trees and ornamentals – Free - limited space available - please RSVP: Rico at 530-365-1920. Hands on fruit tree restoration activity – Also, for those who have assisted in the past and those who may be interested in learning and volunteering to help restore 100 to 150 year old apple trees. Open to people who have taken one of my classes over the last several years or similar with someone else. You don't need to take the restoration workshop class to help with the apple restoration activity. This activity takes place right after the above workshop at 11 AM to? At the Camden House on the same day as the above. Please feel free to contact Rico Montenegro for any questions at 530-365-1920.

**February 12 - Whiskeytown: Camden House Historic Site and Orchards - Hands on fruit tree restoration activity** 11 am - 2 pm. For those who have assisted with the historic trees at the Camden House in the past and those who may be interested in learning and volunteering to help restore 100 to 150 year old apple trees. Open to people who have taken one of my classes over the last several years or similar with someone else. This activity takes place right after the above workshop at 11 AM to? At the Camden House on the same day as the above. Please feel free to contact Rico Montenegro for any questions at 530-365-1920.

**February 12 – Redding: Wyntour Gardens: Care and Pruning of Berries: Blueberries and Cane berries** 11am. All classes are free, class size is limited, please call to reserve your seat: 530-365-2256. 8026 Airport Road Redding, CA. For more information: [www.wyntourgardens.com](http://www.wyntourgardens.com)

**February 19 – Redding: Wyntour Gardens: Grape Vine Pruning Classes** 11 am. All classes are free, class size is limited, please call to reserve your seat: 530-365-2256. 8026 Airport Road Redding, CA. For more information: [www.wyntourgardens.com](http://www.wyntourgardens.com)

**Photo:** Old trees being restored present an arborist with some unique challenges: #2, with otherwise healthy young trees, you would remove crossing and touching branches, but in an old tree you want to maintain all the strong growth you have, such as here.

If you don't see a class near you, contact your nearest independent nursery or botanic garden and ask about one. You will find a listing of regional botanic and display gardens as well as independent nurseries in the [Links](#) section of [Jewellgarden.com](http://Jewellgarden.com). If you are, or know of, an open garden or independent nursery that is not listed – send the pertinent info to me at [Jennifer@jewellgarden.com](mailto:Jennifer@jewellgarden.com) and I will be happy to add it.



**Additional Reading and Pruning resources:**

**Photo:** Old trees being restored present an arborist with some unique challenges: #3, with otherwise healthy young trees, you would encourage a strong central leader or trunk. Here, the central leader or trunk was lost before Rico got to the tree and he was left with two leaders forming a fairly acute crotch, which can be prone to weakness - thus the bolted steel support between the two leaders in an effort to maintain both for as long as possible.



While it may be ideal to learn how to prune in a hands-on environment, I know it's not always possible to get to a class. Therefore, at the end of this article you will find Rico's Tips for Pruning both Young and Established Trees. Rico loves trees – and he loves to talk with and teach other people how to love their trees even better. Feel free to contact him with questions or to see if he is available to come speak in your area.

Many books are also available on the topic of pruning, including a small paperback pamphlet-style book (that Rico thinks every gardener should own) entitled: *How to Prune Fruit Trees*, by R. Sanford Martin, originally published in 1944 by Martin Bio-Products and in its 21st Edition in 2006. I bought my copy at Wyntour Gardens in Redding two winters ago.

Many free write-ups and other resources are available through [Fruit Tree Planting Foundation](#) web site.

Available at or by order from the regional independent bookstore [Lyon Books](#) in Chico, other good books on pruning generally include:

*The Pruning of Trees, Shrubs and Conifers*, 2nd Edition, by George E. Brown and revised by Tony Kirkham, of Kew Gardens in London; Timber Press, 2004.

*Royal Horticulture Society Encyclopedia of Practical Gardening: Pruning*, by Christopher Brickell; RHS, 1996.

*Rodale's Successful Organic Gardening series: Pruning*, by Kris Medic; Rodale Press, 1995.

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To submit plant/gardening related events/classes to the Jewellgarden.com on-line [Calendar of Regional Gardening Events](#), send the pertinent information to me at: [Jennifer@jewellgarden.com](mailto:Jennifer@jewellgarden.com)

*Did you know I send out a weekly email with information about upcoming topics and gardening related events? If you would like to be added to the mailing list, send an email to [Jennifer@jewellgarden.com](mailto:Jennifer@jewellgarden.com).*

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