



# Shaping citrus

**UC DAVIS**  
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL  
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

## About shaping

Shaping citrus can involve pruning, thinning or training.

## Training, pruning, and thinning

**Pruning and training:** Pruning is generally not required to keep citrus productive or attractive. However, you should remove deadwood, very weak shoots or suckers and prune any crossing branches to keep the center of the tree open. You should train trees to have a large fruiting area by allowing the foliage canopy to extend almost to the soil line.

Young citrus do not require extensive pruning. If there are too many vigorous young shoots, then prune these shoots to give a more balanced tree.

Prune all suckers that grow from below the graft or bud union.

It may be necessary to protect exposed branches after pruning from sunburn by painting with a 50:50 white interior latex paint and water mixture.

**When to prune:** Minor pruning can be done at any time. However, it is best to avoid late-season pruning, which can stimulate growth that may be injured by frost.

The best time to prune is just prior to bloom or just after fruit set. The trees can then adjust their fruit loads during the summer.

**Thinning:** Fruit is rarely thinned as citrus trees typically self-regulate their fruit loads; often dropping 80-90 % of flowers. About 1 month after bloom, citrus commonly drop many small pea-sized fruit. Later in spring and early summer, larger golf ball-size fruit may drop if growing is limited by factors such as excess heat or inadequate soil moisture.



Prune just prior to bloom (above)



You can also prune just after fruit set



Train trees to maximize harvest area

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Primary reference and pictures: UC IPM online <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/index.html>

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