

SOUTH AFRICAN SMALLHOLDER

AUGUST 2021
EVERYTHING A SMALL FARMER NEEDS



In this edition:
Pruning season
Know your water rights
Social structure amongst donkeys
...and more!

SOUTH AFRICAN SMALLHOLDER MAGAZINE

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Front Cover

Read about pruning on page 29.

FEATURES

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FEATURE



Understanding soil health

SERIES



Dealing with aphids

RECIPE



Preserving lemons

Stop the world, it's time to get off



Judging by the events of last month ~ yes, the failed insurrection and its associated mayhem ~ the title of a 1960s British musical entitled *Stop The World I Want To Get Off* seems, somehow, applicable. But last month's looting and burning aside, people have long been seeking to opt out of a busy, expensive and often frustrating urban life for something that they perceive to be simpler, cheaper and more wholesome. The trend of movement by couples and families away from the big cities and into smaller, quieter rural towns and villages has been ongoing for some years. It actually started with the Hippie movement way back in the Sixties.

So that now, if you put the looted malls and burnt out warehouses behind you and drive into the glorious South African countryside, through the small towns and dorpiess, you will notice that some that were dopey, almost derelict backwaters are now bright and thriving communities, full of arty craft and coffee shops, often excellent small restaurants, micro-breweries, antiques dealers and bookstores.

And the towns often boast of some heavy hitters in the world of the arts, literature and other cultural pursuits.

On the smallholdings and farms round about, additionally, you will find like-minded people getting back to the land, and trying, in their own ways, to live self-sustainably. It's a dream for many, to be completely self-sufficient. But it's a possibility and a reality for few. For what does it mean to be self-sufficient? Are you really able to do everything, but everything, to live your life in your own little economic, gastronomic and social universe? The answer, however much you may desire it, and however much you may hate interacting with the modern world, is not likely.

Rather, the path to self-sufficiency is a progression: as you move along it you will be able to be self-sufficient in more and more aspects of your life.

For example, it is relatively easy and cheap to be self-sufficient in eggs and chicken. A few hens and a good rooster will see to that. A cow in milk will take care of your dairy needs. A borehole or a well will make you self-sufficient in water. With solar and wind power it is possible to live off-grid for electricity. If you have a wood-fired stove, and access to dead trees, you can heat water and cook food without having to buy gas. A few sheep will keep you in mutton, a few fruit trees in fresh fruit and jam, and a vegetable patch in greens. Herbs and mushrooms are to be had from what grows around one (if one knows what to look for), and an accurate shot now and then can provide you with venison, offal, skins and biltong. Even your house needn't be built out of bought material. Walls can be of local stone, timber, mud bricks or plastered straw bales, floors of hardened dung, roofing of thatch or reed.

But now comes the practical bit. Everything that you do, grow, preserve or make takes time. And the more you do the more of your time will be taken up. Sure, if you're very quick and efficient, or share your tasks or are a good delegator, you will be able to do more than somebody who is slow or disorganised. But you will eventually reach a point that you are on an endless cycle of tasks just to ensure your self-sufficiency, with little time over for anything else, let alone leisure. To some this may be appealing, but to others the prospect may be daunting.

But there's a compromise: Become self-sufficient in some things ~ even a small producer-for-sale-or-barter, and use your time thus available to trade with others in your area.

Much of self-sufficiency lies in your attitude. It requires a certain mindset and a firm belief in the value of what you are doing. And don't beat yourself up if you fail to achieve a goal of total self-sufficiency. Even being partially self-sufficient is more than many people achieve in a lifetime.

More importantly, you will be preserving skills that are becoming lost in the industrial age. Skills such as growing food, milking, butter- and cheese-making, food preserving, leatherwork, and thatching for example. And, if you have kids, you will pass this knowledge on to another generation. Indeed, these are skills that, when the chips are really down, are necessary for life, yet form no part of the schools' life skills curriculum.

The journey towards self-sufficiency will teach you much ~ not only about how much you can do for yourself, but also about your own ability to solve problems, be creative, be flexible and mentally strong. And that seems like something we all need right now.

Pete Bower

Editor



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MAILBAG

Better design of chicken feeders needed for smallholders

Sir ~ I was given your magazine by my sister-in-law almost four years ago when we started our farmsteading journey. I've thoroughly enjoyed every issue and learnt a great deal along the way. Thank you for your dedication to the magazine.

I've been threatening to write to you for some time now about a genuine irritation which I believe anyone who owns a chicken shares: the feeders, both water and food.

Whoever designs them has clearly never owned a chicken because they would know that a chicken's main function is to produce poop. Good eating meat and eggs are merely a happy by-product. And that poop gets into everything! So why on earth design a feeder with nooks and crannies?

I favour the buckets. These have lovely patterned poop-collector handles and tough little corners that require a cotton bud to clean properly (which I hate because they're either single use plastic or flimsy cardboard).

We should let the manufacturers know that maploters need function not (fancy) form.

And, regarding mole-rats ~ try using Racumin paste in their burrows (the kind that doesn't kill anything that eats the dead rat/mole-rat). They need a couple of doses but so far (fingers crossed) it seems to be doing the trick.

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Pet owners encouraged to vaccinate against rabies

Dog owners on Gauteng's West Rand have been urged to ensure that their animals are vaccinated against rabies following the discovery of five cases of rabies among jackal in the Cradle of Humankind area (two confirmed and three suspected) and, late last month, of a confirmed case of rabies in a honey badger. Three people were treated for bites and/or scratches they received from the honey badger, officially described as "post-exposure prophylaxis and wound care".

This amounts to thorough cleaning of the wounds followed by rabies vaccination and rabies immunoglobulin therapy. Failure to undergo this treatment will result in the victim's death.

The disease is effectively controlled in domestic dogs through vaccination, and dogs that are not fully vaccinated for rabies are susceptible to infection.

If an animal (wild or domestic) is suspected to be rabid, including animals presenting with unusual behaviour, hyper-salivation, or signs of paralysis, it is suggested that one contact a local or state veterinarian for the animal to be investigated. One is urged not to approach or attempt to handle animals that are not known to one. Often, rabid wildlife may appear tame and it may be tempting to feed or pet such animals. Rabies has been endemic in South Africa for many years.

It is periodically reported in various parts of the country involving different species. Known, ongoing cycles of rabies exist in domestic dogs, black-backed jackal, mongoose species and bat-eared fox in certain locations of the country. Spill-overs to other wildlife and domestic species do occur, sometimes in locations where the disease is not often reported. The number of cases of rabies in dogs fluctuates, mostly due to the level of vaccination of the dogs in a given area. Human rabies cases are most often associated with exposures to rabid domestic dogs. In Gauteng, rabies is reported infrequently in mongoose and jackal, and more often on the rural outskirts of the province. In 2010 an extensive outbreak in domestic dogs was reported in south-western Johannesburg including Soweto. One human case was reported during this outbreak. The outbreak was controlled through extensive dog vaccination campaigns in the area.

And in 2016 an outbreak of rabies in jackal was also reported from the Muldersdrift area, with a few cases confirmed in domestic dogs, and none in humans. 🌸



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NEWS

Stihl SA to rebuild after looting, fire at head office



Last month's looting in KwaZulu-Natal claimed the head office and main distribution warehouse of one of South Africa's two leading outdoor power brands, both of which are located within a few kilometres of each other in Pietermaritzburg's industrial suburbs. While Husqvarna's South African head office and distribution centre in Mkondeni came through unscathed, the fact that Stihl's premises in Camp's Drift are situated adjacent to a SA Breweries depot (looted) a Makro branch (looted) and a China Mall retail shop (looted) didn't help. Stihl's offices were ransacked and its warehousing behind the offices was looted and burnt to the ground.

Within hours of the disaster Stihl's German chairman, Dr Nikolas Stihl, announced that the head office had established a crisis team to organise measures to get Stihl South Africa up and running again.

"We will rebuild Stihl South Africa," he said. "We will make sure that our customers can continue to buy and use Stihl products in the future."

The company has also pledged to help its dealers, and is diverting stock from other areas around the world to ensure supply in South Africa in the short to medium term. "Containers are being shipped to the country, with plans in place to also send equipment to South Africa by air."

Stihl products are available through a dealer network of more than 140 businesses throughout South Africa, all of whom maintain their own stock of machines, spares and consumables, which will ensure some degree of continuity of supply until the emergency replacement shipments begin to arrive.

Stihl established its first African subsidiary, Andreas Stihl in Pietermaritzburg, in 1996, moving to its custom-built ~ now destroyed ~ warehouse and office complex in 2002. ❁

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Country's water resources in crisis, says TLU SA



Repair South Africa's water resources or ask private institutions to get the job done. That is the message the TLU SA is sending to the Dept of

Water & Sanitation (DWS) and the government in TLU's new campaign about water.

According to the 2019 Water & Sanitation Masterplan, 56% of the 1 150 municipal wastewater treatment works and 44% of the 962 water treatment works are weak or critical, with 11% being utterly dysfunctional.

Because of the deterioration of water treatment works the country's rivers and dams are becoming polluted, with poverty, poor housing, and inadequate prosecution of polluters being exacerbating factors.

Steven Vermaak, chairman of the TLU SA's environmental committee, says "the poor quality of our water not only holds a risk for the availability of drinking water but also for the sustainability of agriculture.

"The more we have polluted urban water resources, the more we have to turn to agricultural water for clean water. The less clean water available for agriculture, the less sustainable agriculture becomes, and the more farms are sold."

On the current trajectory, Vermaak suggests, South Africa is heading towards famine.

The TLU SA has appealed to South Africans to send photos of the dirty water in their area. These photos will then form part of a report to the DWS and government.

"We are hopeful that the Blue and Green Drop projects will come to life again because one of the primary tasks of the department, in terms of the National Water Act, is to inform the public about the quality of river and tap water," says Vermaak.

"It is impossible to solve the problem if the department does not even know the extent of the problem."

The TLU SA has demanded that the DWS:

- ☐ Determines the status of water resources to calculate the measure of repair needed;
- ☐ Appoints competent, experienced people at municipalities and water authorities with a grasp of the problem and who would be able to react quickly;
- ☐ Acts in terms of legislation against those who pollute and dump sewage in dams and rivers; and,
- ☐ Holds the Water Research Commission responsible for executing its mandate.

"Finally, we will pose an ultimatum to the government to repair our water resources within a specific timeframe," says Vermaak. "If the government cannot succeed in this task, we will insist private institutions take over the work."

Photos of polluted water resources can be sent by [WhatsApp to 060 735 3557](https://www.whatsapp.com/channel/00291333333333333333). 🌸

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EVENTS

KragDag changes dates to mid-October



Because the proposed dates would have clashed with another related outdoor show in the same region, namely Kyknet's Buite expo, the organisers of the popular Kragdag event near Rayton east of Pretoria have rescheduled their show to a week later than announced last month. It will now be held from 14 to 16 October. This will be the first Kragdag show to be held since 2019, as the 2020 event was cancelled at the last minute by the Tshwane municipality, which was concerned over the correct implementation of Covid safety protocols.

Tickets to the show cost R100 at the gate, but are free if you register [online](#). If, after last month's announcement of this year's show you registered online, Kragdag's organisers have given the assurance that your ticket remains valid for the revised dates. Meanwhile in the Western Cape, the Nampo Cape show which was to have been held at Bredasdorp Park in September, has been cancelled. This follows the earlier cancellation of this year's main Nampo Harvest Day show at Bothaville. 🌸

EVENTS

Sabio takes Beecon to the people



This year's Beecon event, the beekeeping industry's annual high point, will be taking place in six regions rather than just one location as has been the rule before.

Starting on 12 August, Beecon will be held at six separate locations including East London, Port Shepstone, Mtubatuba, Tzaneen, Levubu and Nelspruit. This change has been made in response to Covid-19 lockdown regulations as well as to meet beekeepers in areas previously uncovered by national conferences. Organisers, South African Bee Industry Organisation (Sabio), in partnership with Samac, the country's macadamia growing organisation, are also aiming to make attendance free to all delegates. As the events will focus on macadamia pollination participation is not limited to Sabio members.

Topics will include the effect of honeybee pollination on macadamia crop yield by Dr Hannelie Human; Environmentally friendly management of macadamia pests: Can it be achieved? by Dr Schalk Schoeman (SAMAC); Maximizing pollination in macadamia by Michel Lenferna; and Additional forage to sustain pollinators and bee populations to maximize pollination by Inge Lotter or Dr Andriaan du Toit.

For more information and to register for Beecon near you go to www.beeconsabio.org.za or click [here](#). 🌸

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GROWING FOR GOOD

Feeding schemes benefit from digital farmers' tool

OneFarm Share

An online platform launched by Standard Bank in partnership with agri-tech pioneer HelloChoice and non-profit organisation FoodForward SA has delivered more than 1 000 tons of fresh produce to feeding schemes countrywide in its first eight months of operation. This translates to six-million meals for more than 350 000 people.

Named OneFarm Share, it is a digital matchmaking platform that links farmers from small to large with registered charity organisations that support feeding operations in impoverished communities.

Standard Bank CEO Lungisa Fuzile says the number of farmers signed up to the platform has increased from 43 in February to 55 at end of May "as more farmers spread the word".

Grant Jacobs, HelloChoice CEO and co-founder, says farmers appreciate the convenience of donating through a single platform and trust OneFarm Share to get their contributions directly to the hungry.

Fuzile says the initiative's goal for 2021 is to deliver 7 400 tons of food across all nine provinces, enough for more than 30 million meals.

OneFarm Share was developed in answer to a problem compounded by Covid-19, where small and micro farmers sat with oversupply as market demand for fresh produce slowed and retailers contracted their supply chains to focus on large off-takers. At the same time, millions of people faced the threat of increased hunger.

Fuzile says, "The OneFarm Share platform provides farmers with everything they need, from finance, to market information, logistics and warehousing support to get food to needy households."

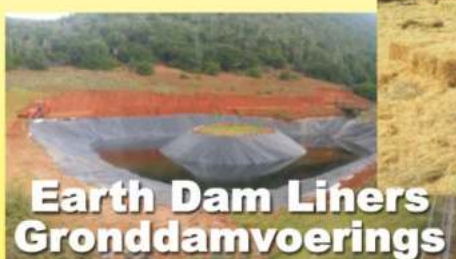
OneFarm Share is funded through donations from companies and the public.

FoodForward SA managing director Andy du Plessis says, "FoodForward SA has the infrastructural capacity, including cold chain facilities and the beneficiary organisation network, to receive the huge donations (of produce) from farmers directly into our warehouses about the country.

"We then distribute this food to our beneficiary organisations which have been previously vetted and receive ongoing monitoring, to ensure that the food donations we receive in trust through the OneFarm Share initiative goes directly to the intended beneficiaries. "

Farmers who donate receive a Section 18A tax certificate for their efforts.

The public, too, can participate by donating via Snapscan, which has enabled international donations. A donation of R100, for example, will provide the equivalent of a nutritious food basket containing cabbages, potatoes, butternut, apples, beetroot and a banana. R250, meanwhile, will provide the same nutritious basket of food for ten people. For more information, visit www.onefarmshare.co.za or click [here](#). 🌸



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SA's equestrian Olympians both thwarted by injury

Both South African equestriennes who qualified to compete at this year's Olympic Games had to withdraw from their respective competitions before completion.

First to pull out was South African-born Tanya Seymour, who emigrated with her family to Australia in 2000 and who has, since 2007, been based in Germany. She was to have taken part in the dressage competition, but withdrew before the start of the games when her 19-year-old horse Ramoneur developed laminitis.

And after a blazing ride in the cross country phase of the individual eventing class, South Africa's other equestrienne at the games, 32-year-old Victoria Scott-Legendre (pictured), withdrew her horse Valtho des Peupliers following detection of a tendon problem. She was lying 34th overall.

In her online bio, Scott-Legendre, the daughter of Colin Scott, owner of Quadmaster ATV Implements of Howick, says she started riding at age four, no doubt encouraged by father Colin, who himself grew up around horses in the Natal midlands.

She based herself in France in 2013, and now runs a professional eventing business with her husband, another eventer, Edouard Legendre. 🌸



Laminitis: The ailment that dashed Olympics hope for SA rider

The withdrawal from the Olympic dressage of South African-born rider Tanya Seymour and her 19-year-old mount Ramoneur highlights a very painful ailment of the foot, namely laminitis.

Having flown the horse from her base in Germany to Tokyo for the event, Seymour was faced with the disappointment when Ramoneur pulled up lame while in training before the start of the games. At first it was thought that he had bruised the sole of his hoof on a stone. However, as the lameness worsened he was examined by a vet, who diagnosed laminitis, which forced Seymour to withdraw.

Affected horses suffer swelling of the soft tissue inside the hoof which, because the hoof cannot expand, causes great pain. At the same time, the pedal or coffin bone, the main triangular-shaped bone in the hoof, either begins to rotate downwards at the front, or simply descends as a whole in the hoof.

In very severe cases the front tip of the coffin bone has been known to protrude through the bottom of the sole.

Although all four feet can be affected it is more common in the forelegs, and a characteristic symptom will be that the horse attempts to lift its weight off the front of its hooves by "leaning" backwards and attempting to rest on the rear part of the hoof.

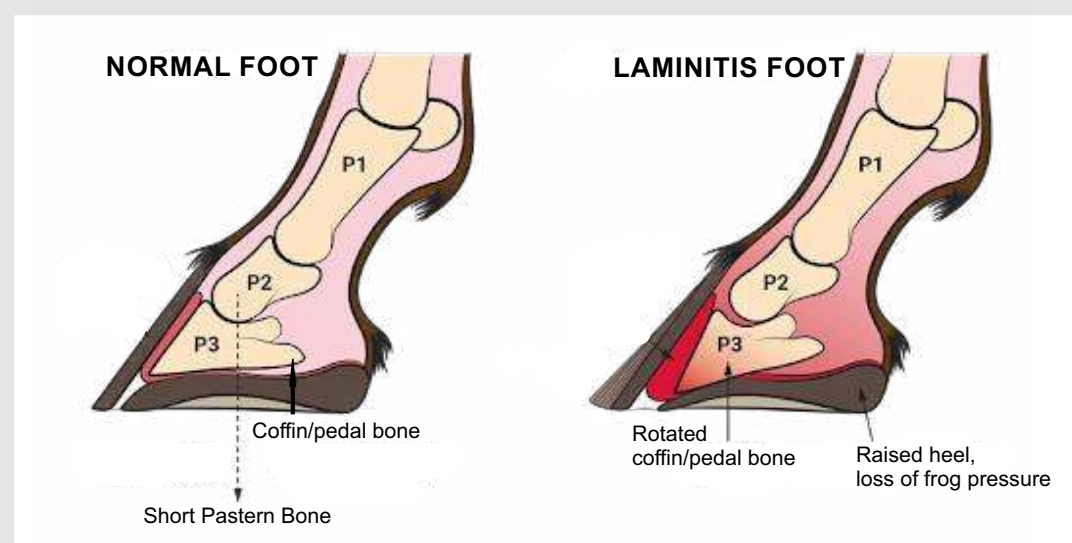
Although it manifests itself in the feet, laminitis is caused by the horse's exercise schedule and diet.

Typically, it is caused by too much food, particularly heating food high in certain nutritional components, and also by too much lush spring grazing, and sudden changes in diet. These nutritional issues are often combined by too little exercise, and can manifest particularly in horses stabled for lengthy periods.

Fat horses, and ponies, are more susceptible to laminitis.

It can also be caused by too much trotting or fast work on hard ground.

If diagnosed correctly and early enough, before the coffin bone has had a chance to rotate or descend, laminitis can be cured, but if left too long this may no longer be possible. 🌸



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Know your rights: Water use and storage

Running any kind of agricultural enterprise, whether for profit or hobby, requires adequate access to clean water and when looking for a smallholding to buy, one of the most important deciding factors should be to be assured of the property's water availability.

But what are the legalities surrounding water rights and responsibilities for smallholders?

The National Water Act of 1998 governs water use and ownership in the country. South Africa, being a water scarce country, has enacted a number of laws to control the use, and hopefully prevent the waste, of fresh water.

Previously, a land owner also owned the rights to the water found on that land. However, under the current regulations water rights are now user-based, and not property-based.

Water use includes the act of taking water from a water source (eg, river, borehole); storing water; impeding or diverting the flow of a watercourse (eg, building a bridge, pipeline, weir etc); disposing of waste in a way that may damage the water source; altering the beds or banks of a watercourse; and using water for recreational activities (eg, fishing, boating).

Under the Act, water use is separated into schedules. Schedule 1 Water Use includes water taken for reasonable domestic use including small gardening (but not for commercial purposes), watering and grazing of livestock (excluding feedlots), storing and using rainwater runoff, for emergencies such as firefighting and recreational activities such as swimming.

Water users in this category can use water without informing the department.

People or businesses operating above these restrictions, for example using intensive irrigation systems for commercial farming purposes, abattoirs, dairy farms etc must apply for a Water Use License (WUL).

A WUL must also be issued for the diversion of rivers and streams; storage of water for any purposes (irrigation, domestic use, aquaculture, recreation etc) from surface runoff, groundwater or fountain flow more than 10 000m³ or where the water area at full supply level exceeds one hectare in total on land owned or occupied by that person or body and not in possession of a permit or permission.

Applications for new Water Use Licenses must be made to your area's Catchment Management Agency, details of which can be found [here](#), and can also be done online [here](#).

Where previously water rights would transfer with the sale of land, Water Use Licenses can only be transferred temporarily.



Agriculture for commercial purposes requires a Water Use License.

This system is often used amongst commercial farmers to assist neighbouring farms with water.

The Act makes provision for what is known as Existing Lawful Water Use which is the use of water authorised by or under any law that took place at any time for a period of two years before the commencement of the National Water Act, 1998.

An Existing Lawful Water Use, with any conditions attached, is recognised but may continue only until water use no longer falls within this existing water use.

Water users with an Existing Lawful Water Use may continue to operate without a license until a



WATER MATTERS, cont'd

responsible authority declares that the person must apply for a license. If a license is not granted the use is no longer permissible. Under this agreement, the act also provides for those who have had their Existing Lawful Water Use changed under their new license to apply for compensation, if the new license has restricted their water use resulting in diminished profits ~ within certain stipulations. Licenses may also be obtained for the use of water found underground on another person's property, provided the land owner consents or there is good reason to do so.

Once issued, a license must specify the water use or uses for which it is issued; the property or area in which it is issued; the person to whom it is issued; the conditions subject to which it is issued; the license period, which may not exceed 40 years; and the review periods during which the license may be reviewed under Section 49, which must be at intervals of not more than five years. 🌸



Watering of livestock on a small scale does not require a WUL.

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ALIEN SPECIES

Smallholders and the law:

Understanding invasives and aliens

Just because you live on a plot does not mean you enjoy a lawless life in terms of your environment. Apart from municipal and local authority by-laws, smallholders are very much affected by laws that relate to protection of biodiversity and agricultural resources, the National Water Act and various laws governing the keeping of livestock.



The National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (Nemba) aims to provide the framework, norms and standards for the conservation, sustainable use, and equitable benefit-sharing of South Africa's biological resources. Alien invasive species are plants, animals, pathogens and other organisms that are exotic, non-indigenous or non-native to an ecosystem, and which may cause economic or environmental harm or adversely affect human health. They spread aggressively, and threaten indigenous environments. The law requires that land occupiers play their part in the fight against invasives. This not only makes one a good citizen, but also a good neighbour. Readers regularly complain to the *SA Smallholder* of neighbours who have done nothing about a highly aggressive invader such as the pompom weed, for example, which in turn makes attempts at eradication even more difficult. The Alien & Invasive Species Regulations for this Act were revised in 2020, and the revised National List of Invasive Species came into effect on 1 March 2021.

The new list includes two additional invasive mammal species; nine fewer invasive birds; 15 additional freshwater fish; one additional terrestrial invertebrate and three additional fresh-water invertebrates. (An invertebrate is an animal lacking a backbone.) The numbers of invasive terrestrial and fresh-water plants, marine plants, reptiles, amphibians, marine invertebrates and microbial species remain unchanged from the 2016 lists. The regulations refer to invasive species, prohibited alien species and exempted alien species.

This list is also divided into categories:

Category 1a: Invasive species requiring compulsory control. These must be removed and destroyed. No permits for their cultivation or keeping will be issued. Any form of trade or planting is strictly prohibited. (Tickseed *Coreopsis lanceolata* pictured above is Category 1a)

Category 1b: Invasive species requiring compulsory control as part of an invasive species control programme. They must be removed and destroyed. These plants are deemed to have such a high invasive potential that infestations can qualify to be placed under a government-sponsored invasive species management programme. No permits will be issued. Any form of trade or planting is strictly prohibited.

Category 2: Invasive species regulated by area. A demarcation permit is required to import, possess, grow, breed, move, sell, buy or accept as a gift any species listed as Category 2 plants. No permits will be issued for Cat 2 species to exist in riparian zones.



Famine weed is a Cat 1 invasive.

Category 3: Invasive species regulated by activity. An individual species permit is required to undertake any of the following restricted activities (import, possess, grow, breed, move, sell, buy or accept as a gift) involving a Category 3 species. No permits will be issued for Cat 3 plants to exist in riparian zones.

It is quite likely that you will have plants in your garden or in your fields which have been declared to be invasive, so it is as well to acquaint yourself

ALIEN SPECIES, cont'd

with the lists, which can be downloaded [here](#).

If you are buying or selling a small farm or plot take careful note of the plants on the property.

The *Smallholder* was made aware of a case where a buyer only discovered after the sale had gone through that he had a serious infestation of "Bankrupt Bush". This is an indigenous invader plant that poses a serious threat to large areas of the grassland and savannah biomes in South Africa. It is unpalatable and very difficult to eradicate.

The regulations specifically state that "The seller of any immovable property must, prior to the conclusion of the relevant sale agreement, notify the purchaser of that property in writing of the presence of listed invasive species on that property." A copy of the Declaration of Invasive Species form needs to be lodged with the Compliancy Officer, Biosecurity Services, Dept of Environment. All in all, it is probably easier to eradicate the offending plants.

Regulation 31 also states that a landowner or occupier of land "may transfer a permit issued in terms of these regulations, to the new landowner or occupier of the same land specified in the permit."

The new owner must "notify the issuing authority within 30 days of such transfer," so that an amended permit may be issued.

The purpose of the legislation is to conserve our indigenous fauna and flora, to foster sustainable use of land, to identify aliens timeously and to prevent the introduction or spread of these problematic species.

Non-adherence to the Regulations by a land owner or a seller of land can result in a criminal offence punishable by a fine of up to R5 million (R10 million in case of a second offence) and/or a period of imprisonment of up to ten years. 🌸

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Geese: Useful birds to keep on a plot

People raise geese for a variety of reasons. They are great at pest control, with an excellent eye for snails, slugs and other garden bugs. They are good at weeding, and make excellent self-sustaining foragers in a large backyard or a pasture.

In addition they supply eggs, are good to eat, and can be plucked for down.

But, good guard birds they are not: they will make a racket when disturbed and the males will approach aggressively, hissing in a fearsome manner. However, they can easily be put to flight by an adult person flapping his or her arms.

There are many goose breeds of all sizes and colours. The Toulouse and the Embden goose breeds are good choices for beginners. Most common plot geese are a mixture of the two.

❑ Embden (pictured top right): Big, pure white geese, the most common breed raised commercially, the Embden originated from Germany and the United Kingdom. The Embden has blue eyes, orange feet and shanks, and an upright stance. The bill is fairly short, stout and orange. They are fast growing birds and will quickly reach about 9 kg for the goose, and 14 kg for the gander.

The Embden's legs are fairly short.

The head is oval-shaped and they have a long and graceful neck.

The body is bulky and well rounded, having a long back and a short tail.

The wings are very strong. The feathers are close and very hard.

The breed's habits are to forage for titbits in the grass and water. They are a very hardy breed.

The adult bird will commence laying eggs fairly early in the year, laying 30 to 40 eggs. They are a very aggressive breed, but they bond well with at least a single human. They will be protective of their wives and young, so children should be kept away from them.

❑ Toulouse: A primarily grey goose from France, that varies from large to massive. They have dark brown or hazel eyes set in a large strong head.

The bill, feet and legs are orange. The neck is dark grey, the breast and keel are lighter and the thighs are darker.

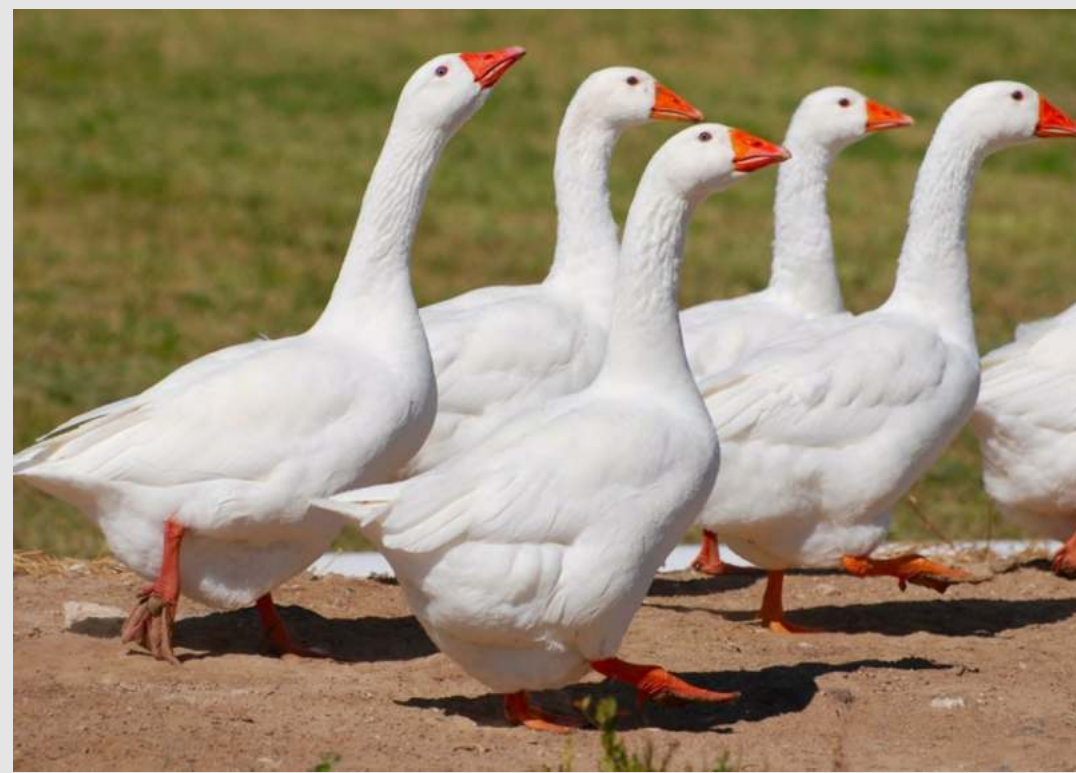
The back and wing feathers are dark grey with almost all of them having a white edge. Due to their size in comparison to their leg length they prefer real ponds.

They are especially hardy, growing quickly with a minimum of care and are very calm. They are not great wanderers, preferring to stay close to home, making them ideal for a large garden or orchard, where they will thrive.

A good Toulouse goose will lay up to 160 eggs a year. However, these birds are not good sitters.

Breeding

Geese should not be bred until they are least two years old, when sexually mature. The breeding season extends only from spring until early summer, so they need every encouragement and protection to ensure the best possible yield. They should be prevented from brooding on their first batch of eggs, as they are seldom fertile and can be



Toulouse Geese.

GEESE, cont'd

used in cooking. Many geese species are monogamous, accepting only one mate. Goose eggs take between 28 and 35 days to hatch. Goslings can be slow to hatch, but you should not interfere and try to help. The young are prone to attacks by rats, sunstroke and drowning. Once established, they can be allowed to accompany their parents on foraging expeditions, as long as they are protected from dogs or other predators. Do not allow foraging on land which has recently been sprayed with insecticide or fertiliser, which could prove fatal.

Plucking

Goose down is first rate for pillows, duvets and eiderdowns. However, don't underestimate the time it will take you to pluck your geese, especially when you are doing it for the first time. A goose can be plucked as often as every six to eight weeks, but never in late autumn or winter.

It should be remembered that plucking taxes the bird's feather production and they therefore should not be plucked in the mating and laying season if they are breeding. The bird must be at least 16 weeks old and



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can be dry plucked. They are hardest to pluck at twelve to 16 weeks, when they are moulting their first set of juvenile feathers. However, many small-scale producers prefer wet plucking, when the bird is dunked into hot water for a couple of minutes. Dry plucking should not be attempted out of doors on a breezy day, unless you want a snow-white garden afterwards. ❀

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Donkeys and their complex social structure

Donkeys are social creatures, although the make-up of their groups in the wild is different from that of domesticated groups. Grouping in feral conditions is quite flexible and is likely to change quite often. Sometimes males live alone or with other males. Sometimes they live with a group of females. At mating time the male will gather a harem of females and become very territorial. They will fight other males who show an interest in their females and these fights can be vicious. Non-territorial males will be allowed to pass through the stallion's territory if they ignore the females.

When the time comes for a pregnant jenny to give birth, she will withdraw from the group. She and her foal will rejoin the group after a few days. The bond between mother and foal is very strong. She can be quite strict with her offspring while she is raising it, particularly with an inquisitive colt. Weaning takes place after six to eight months.

In domestic conditions the donkey might not have the same freedom to choose who to spend time with.

Donkeys very often pair off with a favourite neighbour. They will form a strong attachment and will be very upset if they are separated.

They show their distress by vocalising or pacing anxiously up and down. When they are together they often groom each other, using their teeth to gently scratch their friend's hair.

Because they are so sociable a donkey will be unhappy about living on its own and it will noisily let the whole world know of its sadness. If they can't be with other donkeys, they should be allowed to be with other animals.

In some parts of the world donkeys are used to protect animals such as sheep. Their natural territorial instinct will enable them to chase away predators.

They are sometimes even allowed to run with bulls in order to stop the bulls from fighting, although this practice is now frowned upon. They are also used to calm other



Donkey friends.

animals and even to teach calves or foals to lead.

Donkeys use their whole bodies to show what they are feeling and smallholders who keep donkeys should learn how to read the way they hold their heads, the angle of their necks and position of the tail. If they meet another donkey they might gently blow into each other's noses as part of their greeting and communication. 🌸





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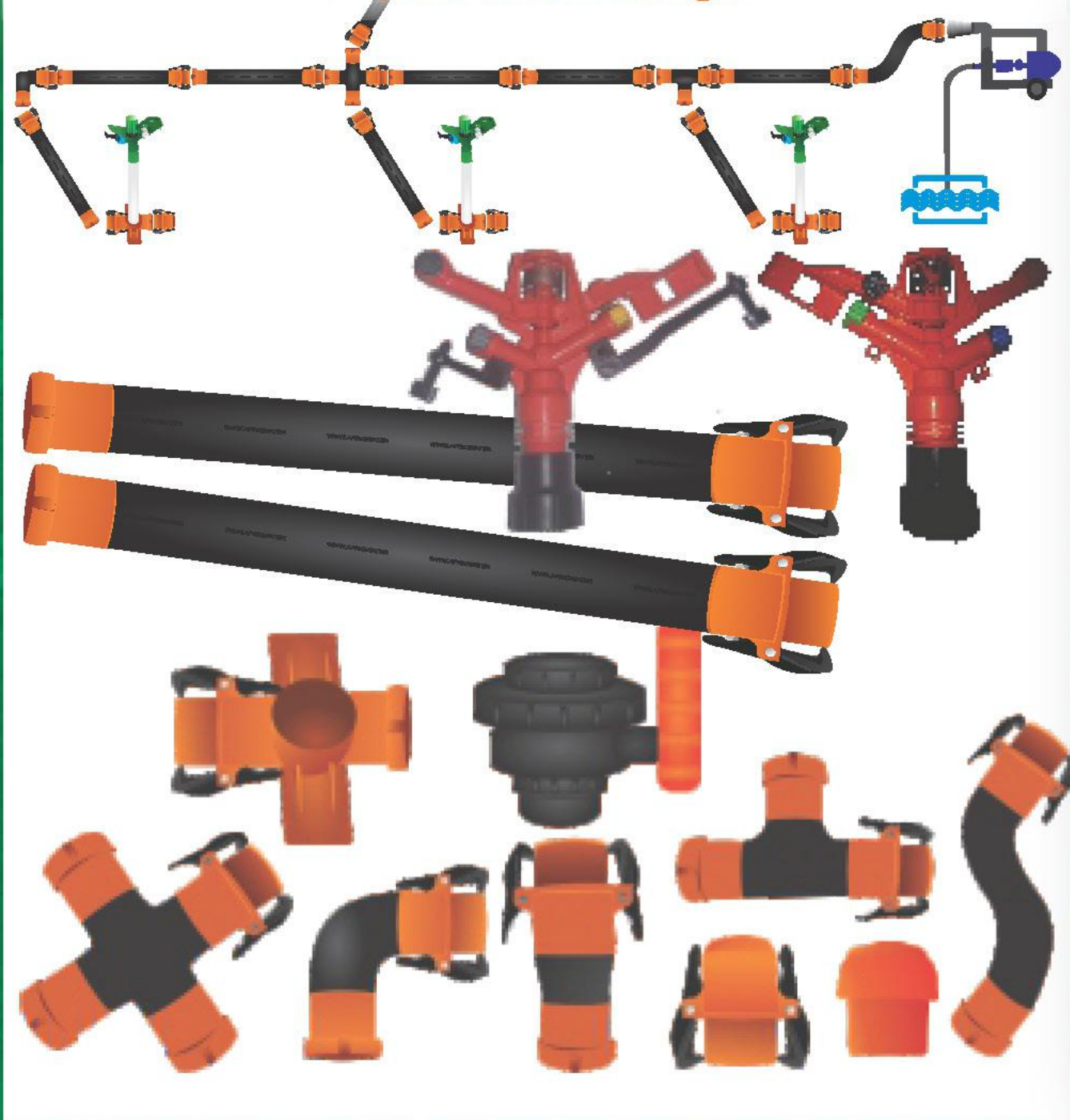




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Pruning season: Where to start

There are some general principles that can be applied to pruning all manner of bushes and trees that are pretty much universal. These include deciduous fruit trees, citrus and roses, and certain shrubs. The purpose of pruning of branches on trees and bushes is to create a strong structure that can withstand wind without breaking, carry heavy crops of fruit (or blooms) which, in the case of fruit trees can be harvested from easily, as the tree is not too large.

In the case of roses in the garden pruning will also have an aesthetic dimension to ensure that the bush fits in visually with the rest of the bushes in terms of size and space.

Most fruit trees (and roses) are best pruned in late winter or early spring. This is because:

- ☐ You want to prune the branches before sap starts running in them.
- ☐ The cut areas are less susceptible to insect infestation in the early spring.
- ☐ Without leaves and blossoms, you can easily see the shape of the tree.
- ☐ The direction of the tree needs to be set before starting its seasonal growth spurt.

Three different tools come in handy when pruning fruit trees:

☐ A hand pruning saw is useful for removing branches that are too big for secateurs or lopping shears. Models with foldable handles are very convenient, as they can be quickly whipped out of a pocket for use, and replaced in the pocket after the cut is made. For bigger limbs that need removing a chainsaw is used. But apply all the necessary chainsaw safety measures when working in a tree, and be careful not to nick the good branches with the chain.

☐ A set of large pruning shears is used to cut branches that are bigger than the size of your little finger.

☐ Long-handled lopping shears give one the leverage necessary for medium-sized branches.

☐ A little pair of very sharp clippers is used to trim all the small stuff. They are easy to handle and can get into tight areas.

Useful apparel to ensure this range of tools is always at hand will be a tradesman's apron with many pockets, or a belt around the waist with tool clips.

If you have a big orchard investigate the new battery-powered shears available from certain outdoor power manufacturers. Typically these comprise a backpack battery pack and a sturdy cable connected to a hand-

operated shear that can cut through even fairly large branches, and has the endurance for a full day's work in the orchard.

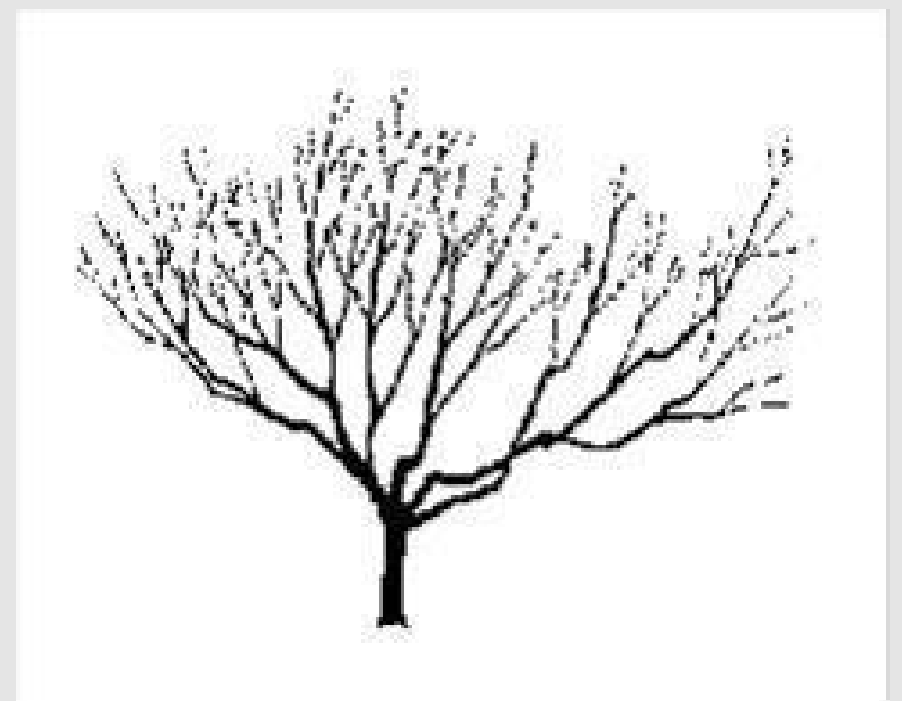
The process of pruning can be divided into certain clearly-defined stages, which apply to fruit trees and roses alike.

☐ First, inspect the tree for dead, diseased and damaged branches and remove them.

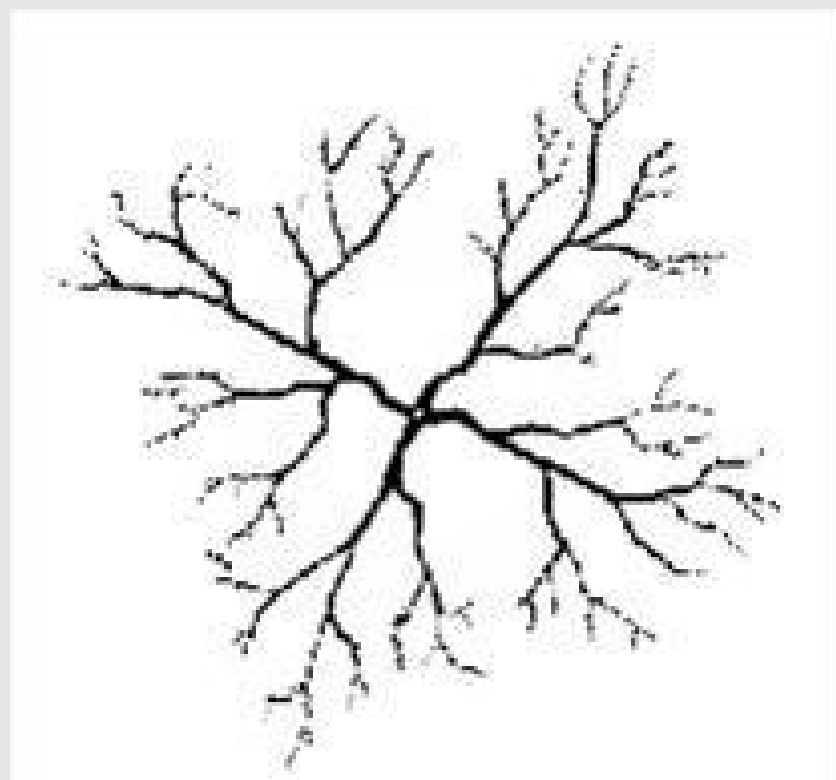
☐ Also remove any branches that are weak, cross each other, grow downward or have narrow crotches.

☐ Clip away any suckers growing from the lower portion of the trunk or up from the roots. These are the little shoots that spring up from the roots of the plant.

With those tasks out of the way, examine the tree or bush visually and



Fruit tree after pruning.



Aerial view of fruit tree after pruning.

IN THE GARDEN, cont'd

imagine it in your mind's eye with about a third to half of its remaining branches trimmed off. Branches that have grown disproportionally can be cut back harder than others to ensure a balanced shape.

Overall height is important as you don't want to have to climb ladder later in the season to reach fruit at the very top. But most important is to try to open up the interior of the tree to allow sunlight to penetrate evenly to ripen the fruit. Thus, vertical branches can be cut back harder than more angled ones.

If your tree has been properly pruned in the past it will have three or four main limbs pointing outwards, each ending in a mass of smaller branches. If the tree has more main limbs, choose which to remove with the big saw, cutting as close to the trunk as possible.

Now get to work on the smaller wood. Cut away bigger branches that look like they will touch as they grow, to a point where they have space around them on which to put out new wood. Next, cut back last season's young growth to no more than two to three buds in each case, and always to buds aimed in the direction in which you want the limb to grow.

The bud above which you cut should generally be pointing outwards, because it is from here that the new growth will come, thus opening the tree out. Cutting above an inwards-pointing bud will result in a closed, vertical tree.

Every few branches take a step back and admire your handiwork. The tree should look balanced from every angle.

It is also important to know how a tree fruits. For example peaches fruit only on shoots from last year's growth on both laterals and fruiting shoots, while in plums fruit is borne on laterals or spurs that are two years or older.

On young trees the spurs look more like a group of short laterals and on older trees like multiple buds. 🌸

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PRUNING

Common fruit trees and how to prune them

Fruit trees should be pruned according to their species. While some aspects are universal, there are key things to remember according to what type of tree you are pruning. Here are some specific guidelines for different species of tree.

Peach trees

The pruning methods for peaches and nectarines are very much the same. Pruning a peach tree opens up the tree and allows sunlight to shine on the fruit. This is important for even fruit production. Also, if you're going to spray your trees for diseases or pests, an open tree helps with equal coverage.

Peach twigs can be killed in one growing season by too much shading. If there's too much shade, eventually no fruiting wood will be present in the lower part of the tree.

Imagine what your hand looks like when holding a giant peach. When pruning peach trees, the shape of your hand is very similar to the shape of the pruned peach tree. The centre is open with three or four main branches angling upward at 45 degrees. Each one of these main branches holds another hand. This second hand is what carries and bears fruit.

You want to keep your tree short, so stand on the ground and crop the branches as high as you can reach with the clippers.

If you have a tall limb where the only new growth is high above your head, cut off the limb. By keeping the tree low year after year, you'll encourage the tree to send out side branches instead of tall branches that reach to the sky. It's a lot easier to prune, pick and care for a low growing peach tree than a tall one.

Looking at an aerial view of the tree, the area where the fruit and leaves grow looks more like a doughnut than a ball.

Now you're going to trim up the remaining limbs, starting with any branches that are growing horizontally and downward. They have a tendency to break and crack when the fruit gets heavy.

Cut off any vertical branches, and ground-level suckers.

Plum and Apricot trees

The trick with plum and apricot trees is to shape them from when they are planted. When you first plant a plum tree, it is important to direct its growth and create a vase shape, keeping the centre open to let in the light. Prune the tree to five to nine well-spaced lateral branches away from the tree's centre.

Branches coming off the side of the shoot are known as laterals and should be left as they produce the spurs for fruit. This will help to establish a solid foundation for future growth.

Cut each of the main branches back by approximately one third; the cut should be made just above the dormant shoot.

In its second season, cut back new growth halfway on the five to nine lateral branches. On those branches not



Pruning a peach tree.



Lopping shears.

PRUNING, cont'd

required as part of the foundation, cut each one back to four buds. Shorten pruned shoots after harvesting the fruit in the late summer. This will encourage the new season's growth. It is also helpful to remove any branches that are not producing plums.

Lemon trees

In recent years it has been proved that pruning citrus can be beneficial for fruit production when it is done in such a way as to let more light penetrate the canopy of the tree.

The conventional wisdom is to always prune after fruiting, but there have been experiments in commercial orchard conditions which prove that lemon trees pruned in summer showed an increase in yield. Carry out many smaller branch prunings, rather than removing just a few larger branches. Aim to have four to six well-positioned, scaffold branches by the first year of bearing. Scaffold branches are branches that grow laterally from a tree trunk and that provide the framework of the mature tree. In subsequent years, remove 'extra' scaffold branches and thorny water shoots, as well as any suckers.

Vines, espaliered & trellised plants

The principles of pruning such plants differs from pruning the species above. 🌸



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PRUNING

How to take care of your trees after pruning

A little aftercare goes a long way to ensuring the health and vigour of your pruned trees and bushes once they are shorn of their superfluous branches.

Many believe that after pruning it is necessary and desirable to coat the cuts of every branch larger than a pencil with a tree sealer.

This prevents fungi and insects from entering the wood of the tree through the tender exposed wood. Another view is that painting with a tree sealer is unnecessary and even harmful in that it introduces chemicals to the wood, and therefore the sap, of the tree.

One point that is probably not in dispute is that if one chooses to seal the cuts, it should be done with a proper tree sealer, and not with paint, tar or rubber waterproofing compound.

Another point is that one should coat the cut alone with sealer, and not any nearby bud as well.

Many also like to spray their dormant, pruned trees with an anti-fungal and anti-parasite compound to ensure that any harmful organisms that may have overwintered in the crannies of the tree's bark are eliminated before the tree starts to bud.

Traditionally, this was done using a lime-sulphur spray. However, lime-sulphur has been found to kill everything it encounters, and to leave residue that is harmful to the general environment long after it has been applied. It is therefore no longer freely available and one must seek out a proprietary brand alternative.

Ensure that your sprayer has good pressure and makes a jet rather than a mist and spray your pruned trees



and bushes and the soil around them at the stated dilution. Do so on a calm day, with no threat of rain, to ensure that the solution can dry on the tree.

Good orchard hygiene is also important to discourage pests so after finishing collect the prunings, and dispose of them by running your trimmings through a wood chipper.

This makes good organic matter for your garden.

Later in the spring, spread some compost or well-rotted manure, which will feed the tree.

Apply the mulch in a thick layer under the canopy from the drip line to about 45cms from the trunk of the tree. If you place mulch too close to the trunk, it will encourage rodents that may damage the bark.

For roses a handful of rose food once a year will ensure full blooms through the ensuing season. 🌸

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Do your summer veg planning now



Smallholders throughout the country must be looking forward to spring with unusual longing, given the events just past this winter. And by now, all your winter maintenance tasks should be just about completed.

So, to make the most of the warmer season ahead now is your last chance to plan what needs to be done where. For, apart from the obvious benefits of being able to schedule tasks to be done through the spring and summer in a logical and evenly spread sequence, drawing up a plan for your property will enable you to budget your expenditure on hardware, seed, fertilizer and fuel to the comfort, hopefully, of your pocket. This planning will start with your pruning and spraying schedule, which you can get underway in the colder areas almost immediately. Helpful articles to get you started are to be found in this edition [here](#).

Then, depending on what you hope to plant, ground preparation needs careful consideration. This should include ploughing or tilling of larger areas, the incorporation of compost or manure and of any broadcast fertiliser or soil additive, eg, agricultural lime, as the case may be.

If you are using established, fixed beds for your plantings now is the time to refer to what was planted last season, so that you can rotate your species in a way that ensures the same crop is not planted in the same bed twice. Crop rotation means that you do not plant the same kind of vegetable in the same bed for three or four seasons. Crop rotation may also reduce pest problems, weed infestation and diseases in the soil.

Crop rotation's greatest benefit lies in the reduction of disease levels in the soil. Many pathogens can persist in the soil after the crop has been removed (such as black-rot in cabbage). To ensure effective crop rotation you can divide your garden into:

Group 1: Brassicas such as cabbage and cauliflower and leeks and onions;

Group 2: Roots, such as carrots, turnips and beetroot;

Group 3: Fruiting, leafy and solanaceous veg such as tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, aubergine, and swiss chard and lettuce etc.;

Group 4: Legumes such as beans, peas and lentils.

You can plan your rotations as in the table alongside.

	AREA 1	AREA 2	AREA 3	AREA 4
YEAR 1	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4
YEAR 2	GROUP 4	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3
YEAR 3	GROUP 3	GROUP 4	GROUP 1	GROUP 2
YEAR 4	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4	GROUP 1

Simple crop rotation plan.

Whatever you add to your soil should be tied in to what you intend to plant, and how much to buy will depend on grammage per square metre as recommended by the manufacturer and the needs of the plant.

Irrigation

If it is large areas of vegetables that you wish to plant, now is the time to plan and prepare your planting ridges, and irrigation.

And if you are contemplating installing a drip irrigation network for these plants, now is the time to draw an accurate plan of your beds, in relation to the constraints of the crop and the dripline, so that you can accurately calculate, firstly how much dripline you will need, as well as how many connectors, elbows, end caps, stopcocks and filters etc for the system. With this plan you will also be able to calculate how many plants you will be able to grow, because the drippers in a standard dripline come in two spacings, namely 30cm or 60cm.

So, for example, if your overall bed measures 9m by 9m, and you wish to space your plant rows 60cm apart (to allow for cultivation in between) you will have space for 15 rows (900cm divided by 60cm = 15). Given

HORTICULTURE, cont'd

that your bed is also 9m long you will need 135m of dripline for the beds (9m multiplied by 15 = 135), plus 9m of plain pipe to join the driplines up. The other hardware that you will need multiples of will includes two elbows for the two outer driplines, and 13 T-pieces for the inside ones, plus one further T-piece to connect to the incoming water supply, and 15 end caps for the furthest ends of the driplines.

For a real Rolls-Royce set up, include 15 small stopcocks, one per dripline, so that you can regulate when beds are watered or not, depending on when you plant your seedlings. How many plants will this layout give you? At a spacing of 30cm in the row, a total of 450 (13 500cm divided by a spacing of 30cm). This is simply an example of how you would do the sums to work out what you would need and can be adjusted for the space available to you.

Soil Additives

You can even calculate how much fertilizer you will need, and how much water the set-up will consume. For fertilizer, for example, at 5g per plant every month you will need 22,5kg a month, while a daily watering



Drip irrigation.

of one hour using a 1 litre per hour dripline (you specify the throughput of the drippers at the time of purchasing the line, at usually 1 litre or 2 litres per hour) you will use 450 litres per hour. Finally, if you grow your own seedlings, August is the right month to sow your seed in trays or seedbeds, so that they have time to reach a reasonable size for planting out when the weather is warm. In colder areas that may still experience frost at night protect the seedbeds or trays with a covering. And, you can help bring on germination by covering them lightly with transparent roof sheeting or greenhouse plastic during the day to act as a mini-greenhouse. 🌸

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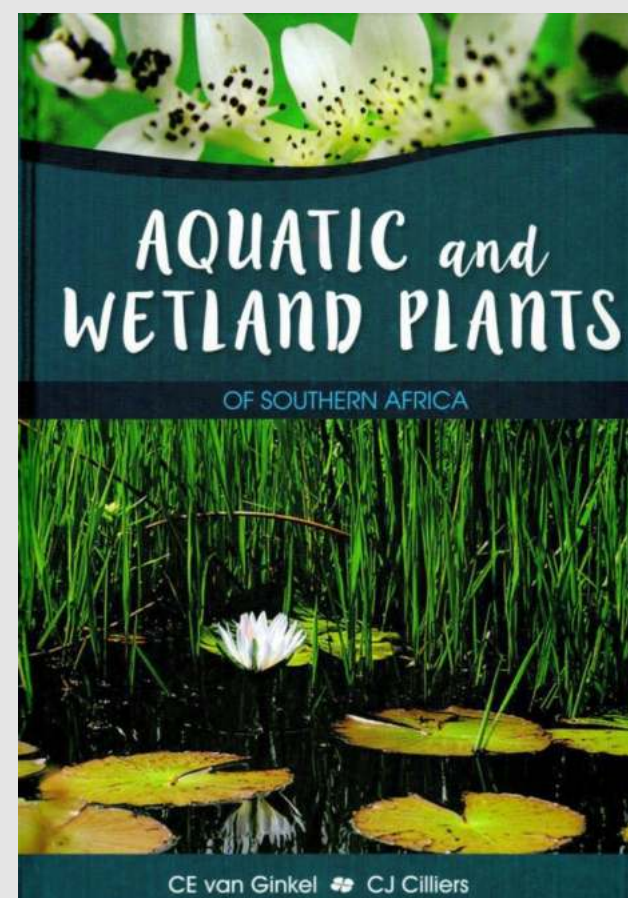
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A Toyota tractor & the Portuguese lighthouse



Smallholdings can sometimes become monuments to folly, and some of the things that we and our neighbours get up to can keep one chuckling for years. Sometimes they involve trying to do something without the right equipment. Trevor, a man I knew in our suburb, one day long ago wished to smooth his field with a tractor rake. Only he didn't have a tractor. All he had was a Toyota Corolla. No matter, he hitched up the rake and started work. After a few passes up and down the field the car became stuck. No matter, thought Trevor. He'd been doing so well that, surely, a little revving and lurching and wheel spinning would free the car? No. It just dug in solidly, up to its axle. So Trevor had to prevail upon a neighbour to haul him out with HIS tractor. Sometimes they involve misunderstood instructions given to workers. Les, another local wanted to plant a windbreak of evergreen trees. So he bought the correct number of saplings, marked out the position and depth of the holes required and let his worker get busy. The problem was that Les worked away from home. And so after a spell away he returned and was delighted to find the saplings all neatly planted in correctly-spaced holes. He was pleased. However, as time passed, and even with diligent watering, the trees remained small. Growth was minimal. Les couldn't understand it. He had deliberately bought a fast-growing species to make a windbreak in the shortest possible time. He fertilised some more. He watered. He weeded and tended. And still the trees remained small. Then, as he was digging around the base of one of his saplings to take a soil sample for analysis, he noticed some old, black plastic in the ground. So he dug a little more. And soon realised that the 100-odd trees of his windbreak had all been planted in their plastic nursery bags. He remembered then that he hadn't actually told his worker to remove the saplings from their bags before putting them in the holes.

Sometimes a maplotter's folly is simply caused by stupidity. Erwin, a neighbour, built a double-storey house on his plot, close to an intersection on a busy road. Above the roof of his double storey he built a tower on which he installed a large water tank. By doing so, he proudly informed everybody, he would have adequate water pressure in the house, without the need for a pump.

Erwin was also security conscious, so atop his water tank he installed a large floodlight, which filled his yard with light at night and shone brightly down the road for at least a kilometre. The house became known to locals as "the Portuguese lighthouse" because the plot had previously been owned by a Portuguese family.

Now you know those signs on country roads that have random holes in them, or are pockmarked with shot? To a certain type with a gun, a sign on a deserted road is an open invitation for a little impromptu target practice. So how much more of an invitation for target practice is a bright floodlight high in the dark night sky, and clearly visible down a country road? Hitting such a small target, however, requires a bit of skill, so one's shot may indeed miss if one is inaccurate. Left of the light, above the light, or right of the light and the bullet will whizz safely away and land in the veld a few kilometres down the road. But if it misses because the aim was too low? Remember the watertank? Some time after he had installed the tank and light a permanent ladder appeared for the tank repairman to have easy and frequent access to patch the holes. Then Erwin gave up. Yet another bullet emptied the tank one night, a new tank was installed at ground level, and Erwin's water supply was provided by a booster pump. A few nights later a further pot-shot destroyed the light. And we all lived happily ever after in darkness.

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