

Figure 2. Preserve the branch collar with a proper pruning cut.

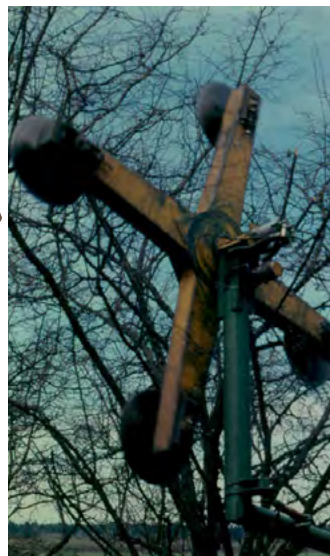


Figure 3. Mechanical hedger in action in a mature orchard.
Photo: Jeff Olsen.

There is no conclusive evidence that dressing wounds after pruning helps prevent wood rot. To reduce the danger of wood rot after pruning, cut small wood high in the tree rather than large branches, and cut to the branch collar but not through it (Figure 2).

Pruning to Reduce Height

Many mature hazelnut orchards need to be reduced in height. Overgrown orchards present several challenges. It is difficult to achieve thorough spray coverage at the tops of the trees. Too-tall trees also shade out much of the sides of the trees, so the crop is restricted to the very tops of the trees. All of the nuts are produced on the top third of the tree, and the other two thirds are just support scaffolding. This is not a very efficient tree form. The middle third of the tree should also be productive. In older orchards, the bottom third will always be just support wood.

Choose a level that you want to bring the tree down to. In most overgrown orchards, you will be cutting off about 10–15 feet in height. Allow for a range of height because you are not going to give the tree a “flattop”. Remember: You are going to cut to lateral branches that are within the height range—they are not likely to be all at the same height.

Your goal in a rotational pruning program is to remove half of the fruiting wood on the trees you prune. By starting with height reduction cuts, you are likely to be very near your goal after making them.

Mechanical Hedging

Some growers use mechanical hedging with gang saws to renovate an overgrown orchard (Figure 3). This is a rapid, economical way to remove large amounts of wood. Yields have increased in some older orchards after hedging. Regrowth often is so rapid that the space between trees created by hedging is filled in after two seasons.

One disadvantage of mechanical hedging is that the cuts are made indiscriminately in a straight plane, often resulting in a lot of dead branches lower in the tree. Also, all new growth is concentrated along the plane of cutting. Growth in other parts of the tree might be reduced unless you do some follow-up hand pruning.

Orchards with eastern filbert blight cankers will require more detailed hand pruning to remove all of the infected tissue. Prune back at least 1 foot past the last visible canker on Barcelona and at least 3 feet past on susceptible varieties such as Ennis. Destroy the infected wood.

For More Information

Many Oregon State University Extension publications on hazelnut production are available through the OSU Extension Catalog:

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/>

The “Growing Hazelnuts in the Pacific Northwest” series of publications replaces OSU Extension publication EC 1219, *Growing Hazelnuts in the Pacific Northwest*.

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Published November 2013.