

The care fruit trees get during the first season can make or destroy the orchard. Most fruit trees need some support to prevent tender trunks from bending and possibly snapping in high winds. Excessive swaying can also prevent roots from getting a solid grip on the soil. Drive an iron pipe or 2 x 2-inch stake well into the ground beside the tree at planting time. Then loop rope or wire around trunk and pipe. Avoid injuring the bark by passing wire or rope through a piece of rubber hose or plastic tubing.

Newly planted trees will need moderate pruning. Thin out all but a few branches, and cut back the top. As for fertilizers, most trees of any age do better if underfed. Too much fertilizer can lead to jungle-like growth and a scarcity of fruit. Keep trees tidy by mulching with an ample layer of straw or other organic material. Pull the mulch several inches away from the trunk to discourage rodents from gnawing on tree bark.