

Fruit trees occasionally bear more fruit than they can hold. As a result, limbs droop under the increasing weight until they snap. The entire tree may threaten to split down the middle if major branches on opposite sides of the trunk are heavy. One of the best ways to lighten the load is to remove some of the fruit. Dwarf varieties especially will benefit from regular thinning.

Inspect the tree about four to six weeks after blossoming, and remove all those fruits that appear diseased, shriveled, or wormy. Later, thin again so fruits will be six to eight inches apart for apples, pears, and peaches and four inches apart for plums and nectarines. If branches still sag, use a pole or stake, driven an inch or two into the ground, as a support.