

February 2010

With the advent of global warming, the USDA moved the Willamette Valley up to Zone 8. We were expecting to be able to grow Bananas and Papayas in the near future. Apparently, the USDA was a little



premature. In December we had a low temperatures of 7°F, well into zone 7. That ties the record low, recorded back to the old days before global warming.

Apparently global warming doesn't mean warming for everyone. The new term is climate change. Now we can expect to get warmer or colder and drier or wetter and more confused no matter where we are. Planning is easy: just plan for the worst. Be grateful when it doesn't happen and glad you were ready when it does.



## To Grow a Tree

We have recently had people asking us about how to go about pruning to develop a specimen tree from a liner. Many of you have been doing this for years, so you probably know all of this. Please bear with us.

Most important is to establish a straight central leader. Most growers use stakes, whether bamboo, steel or fiberglass. Next is branching. Branches below six feet will eventually be removed, but it is important to retain those lower branches as long as possible. They grow caliper and taper, very important for the strength of the tree. Remove these when they become finger sized. These temporary branches should not be allowed to grow upwards so that they shade out the emerging scaffolding branches.

Scaffolding branches are those limbs beginning at 6' or 7' above the ground and will become the main lower branches of the mature tree. Choose branches that have wide angled crotches without included bark. Each scaffolding branch should be 6" to 12" above the lower branch and all sides of the tree should have branches. Avoid having branches directly opposite each other.

Second and third year tress will probably be pruned twice a year: once after the spring flush and again during the dormant season. Dr. Shigo said never to prune when the leaves are coming on and when the leaves are turning color.

The general shape of the canopy should be kept cone-like, pointed at the top, wide at the bottom. Any crossing or dead branches should be removed. If two branches take up the same space, one is redundant. Keep the inner canopy open for air circulation, but don't try this with Washington Hawthorne. You'll be sorry.

Topping is also usually necessary. If the leader grows too tall, it must be pruned back to 18" above the top branches. Always make sure the new terminal bud is trained straight up.

As the tree gets into the fourth and fifth year, less pruning will be necessary, but obviously, you want the tree to be sold by then.

These tips have been meant as a general guide. Each particular species has it's own responses to pruning. You will learn these as you work with the tree and in a few years, you'll be giving pruning advice.

