

COMMODITY

TREE FRUITS

Description

British Columbia's tree fruit industry is centered in the Okanagan Valley with some production occurring in the Kootenays, the Fraser Valley and on Vancouver Island. Apples are the dominant species grown. Apricots, cherries, peaches, pears and plums are also produced.

B.C.'s hot dry summers and cool winters make the province well suited to fruit production. Apple trees must be cross-pollinated if they are to bear fruit. When trees blossom in the spring, growers place beehives in their orchards to ensure that pollination occurs. Fruit trees take two to three years to begin bearing fruit, four to eight years to reach full production, and will live 20 years or longer. Pruning is required to maximize fruit production. Most fruit is shipped to packing houses where it is cooled, graded, packed and stored until it is shipped to market.

Farm Practices of Particular Interest

Practices for specific farm activities can be found in the Farm Practice section of this reference guide. Farm practices that are of particular interest to tree fruit production include the following.

Aircraft Activities

Cherry growers may use helicopters to blow water residue off cherries to reduce fruit splitting once the fruit starts to ripen.

See also Farm Practice: [Mobile Equipment](#)

Frost Control

Orchardists may use wind machines to protect fruit from frost damage in lower areas where temperature inversions typically occur. Wind machines generally operate during the night or early morning hours. Smudge pots, heaters and irrigation systems may also be used for frost protection.

See also Farm Practice: [Stationary Equipment](#)

Irrigation

Tree fruits require irrigation in most regions of the province to grow a viable crop. Irrigation systems usually operate 24 hours per day. Fertilizers may be applied through the irrigation system.

See also Farm Practice: [Irrigation](#)

Pesticide Application

Pesticides may be applied at any time during the spring, summer or fall. Pesticides may be applied any time of day, but spraying operations are generally conducted early in the morning or late in the evening

when winds are usually at their lightest. Occasionally, it may be necessary to spray at night in order for orchardists to treat their crops in the time frame required. Many pesticides have very specific conditions under which they must be applied to be effective.

See also Farm Practice: [Storage of Hazardous Material](#)
[Pesticides](#)
[Weed Control](#)

Pruning

Prunings are usually mulched but they may be piled and burned provided that the *Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation* is observed. Mechanical pruning equipment may be used.

See also Farm Practice: [Burning](#)
[Crop Residue Management](#)
[Mobile Equipment](#)

Transportation

Orchardists may own or manage vehicles making deliveries or hauling products 24 hours a day. Producers must supply adequate areas on the farm property to handle the volume, movement, and parking of trucks and other traffic related to the activities and production of the farm. Operations which sell directly to the public must provide adequate space for customers to park off the road.

See also Farm Practice: [Direct Farm Marketing and Agriculture Tourism](#)
[Product Processing](#)
[Transportation](#)

Wildlife Control

The use of bird scaring devices in tree fruits is a common practice. Propane cannons are noisy and growers may frequently receive complaints about their use from neighbours. Bird distress calls, orchard pistols or other electronic noise makers are also subject to complaints. Growers are encouraged to use an integrated management approach to control bird damage to crops.

See also Farm Practice: [Wildlife Damage Control – South Coastal BC](#)
[Wildlife Damage Control – Interior BC](#)

Principal and Accessory Buildings

From an operational perspective, principal farm buildings on tree fruit and nut growing enterprises are typically those used for produce storage, sorting, separating, cleaning, grading, packing, processing, or direct farm marketing. Accessory farm buildings may include storages for a variety of agricultural wastes, chemicals, compost input materials, compost products, manure and wood waste. Other accessory structures could include processing facilities, machine sheds, and on-farm composting buildings. From a watercourse protection perspective, however, the definition of principal and accessory buildings may differ. For the purposes of determining applicable setbacks from watercourses and property lines, therefore, local government bylaws or the *Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas* should be consulted. Building assessments may need to be conducted on a case-by-case basis if the designation of a building as principal or accessory is unclear.

Legislation

Agricultural producers are expected to follow all legislation that pertains to their farming operations. The *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* stipulates that the farm operation must meet the *Public Health Act*, *Integrated Pest Management Act*, *Environmental Management Act* and the regulations under those acts. Information on federal and provincial legislation can be found in Appendices B and C.

Acts that pertain to specific farm activities are listed in the Farm Practices section of this reference guide. Local government bylaws may also apply to some farm practices. Acts that are not referenced elsewhere and which may be of special interest to tree fruit producers include the following.

Provincial Legislation

The *Wildlife Act* regulates the hunting, angling and management of fish and wildlife resources.

Local Government Legislation

Local government legislation may include applicable noise bylaws.

Publications

Publications that provide information on tree fruit production include, but are not limited to, the following. Refer to Appendix D for details.

British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide

Deer Exclusion Fencing for Orchards – Woven Wire

Fertigation Guidelines in High Density Apples and Apple Nurseries in the Okanagan – Similkameen

Field Guide to Harmful and Beneficial Insects and Mites of Tree Fruits

Integrated Fruit Production Guide for Commercial Tree Fruit Growers

Protecting Orchards from Deer

Protecting Orchards from Spring Frosts