

# NATURAL GARDENER

## Apricots

Apricots grow luscious fruit and make beautiful early spring flowers. Apricots bear fruit inconsistently due to our unpredictable winter temperatures in the south. Expect to harvest fruit only once every three to five years. Apricots are self-fruitful and do not require a pollinator. Space trees 20 feet apart.

Consult our handout *Planting & Maintenance Guide for Fruits, Nuts, & Berries* for further instructions.

Prune apricots according to the open center method:

**At Planting:** Cut the main stem back to a height of 28 to 30 inches. If there are any branches that are suitable for scaffold branches (strong, evenly spaced, somewhat lateral branches), then cut these back to leave 2 to 3 buds on each. If not, cut all branches back, leaving only the main stem. Allow the tree to grow freely the first year.

**2nd & 3rd Winter:** In January to mid-February, select 3-4 evenly spaced scaffold branches, if you haven't done so already. Head back (prune the tips of) these to 24" from the trunk. Remove any growth arising on the scaffold branches within 6" of the trunk. All branches on the trunk above or below the scaffold branches should be removed. Remove suckers and branches growing down, towards the center, or vertical.

**Subsequent Winters:** Long, slender branches should be headed back each winter to induce further branching. Continue removing suckers and branches growing down, towards the center, or vertically.

Consult a reputable, current book or internet site for more pruning information. DO NOT use the "flush cut" method for pruning ANY type of tree. Be sure that your pruning information is current and recognizes the importance of the branch bark ridge and branch bark collar.

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### Apricot varieties for Central Texas (chilling hours)

**Moorpark** (600 – 700 hours) Large. Brownish-red skin. Firm, highly colored flesh; rich luscious flavor. This variety is a favorite for fresh eating, preserves, and pies.

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