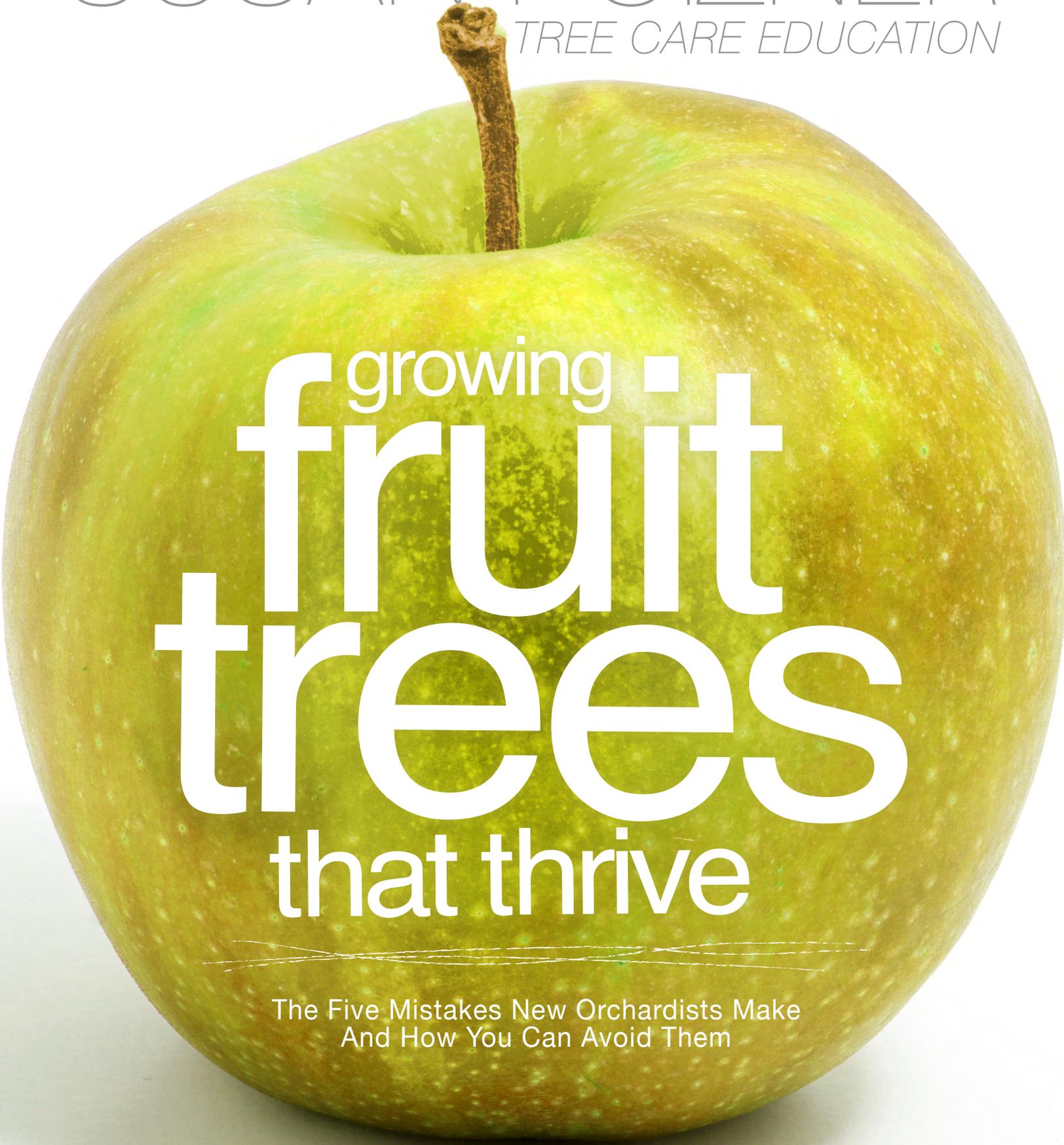


SUSAN POIZNER
TREE CARE EDUCATION



growing
**fruit
trees**
that thrive

The Five Mistakes New Orchardists Make
And How You Can Avoid Them

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by SUSAN POIZNER

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GROWING FRUIT TREES THAT THRIVE

Are you thinking of planting a fruit tree? Fantastic! Like other trees, fruit trees are great for the environment – they clean our air and stabilize our soil. They provide shade and attract pollinators to our gardens.

But fruit trees do more than that. Each year a mature fruit tree can provide us with hundreds of pounds of apples, pears, apricots, cherries, plums or peaches. This bounty can help us save money on our grocery bills while also cutting down on the environmental cost of importing fruit from far away.

So why is it that many people are disappointed after they plant their fruit trees? Some say that their

trees have never produced any fruit. Others say their trees look messy and have pest and disease problems. Sometimes the fruit is wormy, mushy, or it just doesn't taste good.

The answer is that fruit trees respond directly to their care. Healthy, well-tended trees are more likely to produce an abundant, sweet harvest while neglected and sickly trees often produce disappointing fruit.

How do you ensure that your tree will be the healthy and productive type? A good place to start is to learn the five mistakes that new growers make – and how you can avoid them. So get ready, and let's dig in!

mistake number 1

PLANTING THE WRONG TREES



Often, aspiring orchardists decide they want to plant a fruit tree and what do they do? They rush off to the garden centre to buy a tree that produces familiar varieties of fruit - like Bartlett pears or McIntosh apples.

The problem is that many popular fruit tree varieties are vulnerable to pest and disease problems so most commercial growers help them along by spraying them with toxic pesticides and fungicides. Needless to say, this is not ideal for the home or organic grower.

In contrast, specialist fruit tree nurseries have a wider selection of trees – including hardy, disease-resistant, or even unusual native varieties like pawpaws and persimmons – and you can choose one that is best suited to your unique conditions. So it's important to do some research to find the right tree.

A FEW THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- *Can the tree survive in your climate zone?*
- *What rootstock was the tree grafted on to and how large will it be at maturity?*
- *What are the tree's pollination requirements? Some trees need to be planted in twos and threes in order to produce fruit.*
- *Is the tree resistant to the types of fruit tree diseases that are prevalent in your community?*
- *What is the harvest time of the fruit? Be sure to stagger your harvest so that different trees fruit at different times in the growing season.*
- *Learn about bare root trees and how to plant them as most specialist fruit tree nurseries sell and ship bare root rather than potted trees.*

For a list of fruit tree nurseries in North America, **click here or visit** orchardpeople.com/fruit-tree-nurseries.

mistake number 2

WATERING INCORRECTLY



Most of us know that young fruit trees need babying until they establish themselves. In fact, newly planted trees should be watered deeply at least twice a week during the growing season for the first year or two after they are planted in the ground.

Watering is essential to keep your tree hydrated. But it's also key in keeping your tree well nourished. That's because fruit trees can only absorb the nutrients in the soil if they are in liquid form. So dry soil will lead to a malnourished tree.

While watering your tree regularly is important, how you water your fruit tree matters too! That's because fruit trees are vulnerable to fungal diseases, and excess moisture on the bark, branches and leaves can make those problems worse.

A FEW HINTS ABOUT HOW TO WATER YOUR TREE:

- *Water the roots, not the branches, leaves or bark! The roots are the only part of the tree that can absorb water.*
- *Avoid sprinkler systems that will water the entire tree as the excess moisture on the branches and leaves can encourage fungal diseases.*
- *Water all around the tree's roots on all sides of the tree to ensure all the roots are hydrated.*
- *Fruit trees need to be watered deeply and slowly – try using soaker hoses looped around the base of your tree so that the water can slowly soak into the ground.*

▲ *We all know that young fruit trees need regular watering, but how you water your fruit tree also matters.*

mistake number 3

NOT PRUNING YOUR TREE



We all know fruit trees that look like they need a serious “haircut”. The problem is that messy, unpruned trees don’t just look bad, but they become a magnet for pest and disease problems.

Fruit trees need good air circulation in order to thrive. Correct annual pruning also helps you create a solid, fruit-bearing structure for your tree that will last a lifetime.

HINTS ABOUT FRUIT TREE PRUNING:

- *One of your key pruning goals is to create a solid, fruit bearing structure for your tree.*
- *Annual pruning begins when your tree is young as its branches are flexible and easier to shape.*
- *Your first pruning is called a “whip cut” and you do it right after planting your bare root tree.*
- *Winter pruning spurs vigorous growth while summer pruning is key in disease prevention.*

mistake number 4

IGNORING PEST & DISEASE SYMPTOMS



▲ Goopy stuff oozing out of your fruit tree is not a good sign. Monitor your trees regularly for pest and disease problems and deal with problems right away.

Many of us are members of the “hope for the best” school of fruit tree care. In this school, we may notice strange things happening to our fruit trees – like spots on the leaves, or goopy stuff oozing out of wounds on the bark or branches – and we ignore these things, hoping that the tree will somehow get better on its own.

The truth is that when you are growing fruit trees organically, it's easier to prevent pest and disease problems than to cure these problems once they have already spread all over your tree and to other trees in your neighbourhood.

Pest and disease prevention doesn't have to be complicated. Depending on the problems, you will use simple tools like pruning, insect traps, and organic sprays.

TIPS FOR PREVENTING PESTS AND DISEASE:

- *Monitor your trees every week and look for changes or problems.*
- *If you see a problem, research it online or talk about it with your local expert or mentor.*
- *Once you have identified the problem, implement a solution as pest and disease problems can spread quickly both within the tree and to other trees nearby.*
- *Don't be scared to find out what the problem is! Sometimes the solution can be as easy as just pruning a diseased branch off a tree and carefully disposing of the branch.*
- *Consider taking a workshop on fruit tree pests and disease while your tree is still young and healthy. You'll learn what problems to look for and how to deal with them when they arise.*

mistake number 5

NOT PRIORITIZING YOUR TREE'S NEEDS



◀ *Thinning – or removing some of the baby fruit from your tree – is an important part of caring for young and mature fruit trees.*

When I planted my first fruit trees, all I could think about was how good the fruit was going to taste and how much money I would save on my grocery bills! Over the years, I've realized that in order to receive that abundance, you also have to give. Fruit trees are delicate and they need support from their human keepers in order to thrive.

A FEW THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP:

- *Before you plant your tree, test and amend your soil and to improve it by planting green manure that you will till in to the soil before planting day.*
- *For the first two years after planting, remove all of the baby fruit from your tree! If you allow your tree to fruit when it's very young, it won't have enough*

energy to devote to establishing a healthy root system.

- *Once the nutrients in the soil are absorbed, your fruit tree's feast turns into famine. Ensure that you feed your tree annually in the early spring by putting compost or well-rotted manure around its roots.*
- *Learn how to evaluate your tree's nitrogen needs by examining the new growth on their branches. Young fruit trees are often nitrogen deficient and you may need to add an organic source of nitrogen to help them along.*
- *Weed around your fruit trees and ensure that there is nothing planted close to them that will compete with your tree for water and nutrition. That means no weeds. No shrubs and no veggies growing within 10 square feet (1 square metre) of your tree.*

the moral of the story

WHEN IT COMES TO FRUIT TREES,
THERE IS ALWAYS MORE TO LEARN!



◀ Earn a certificate in fruit tree care online at orchardpeople.com.

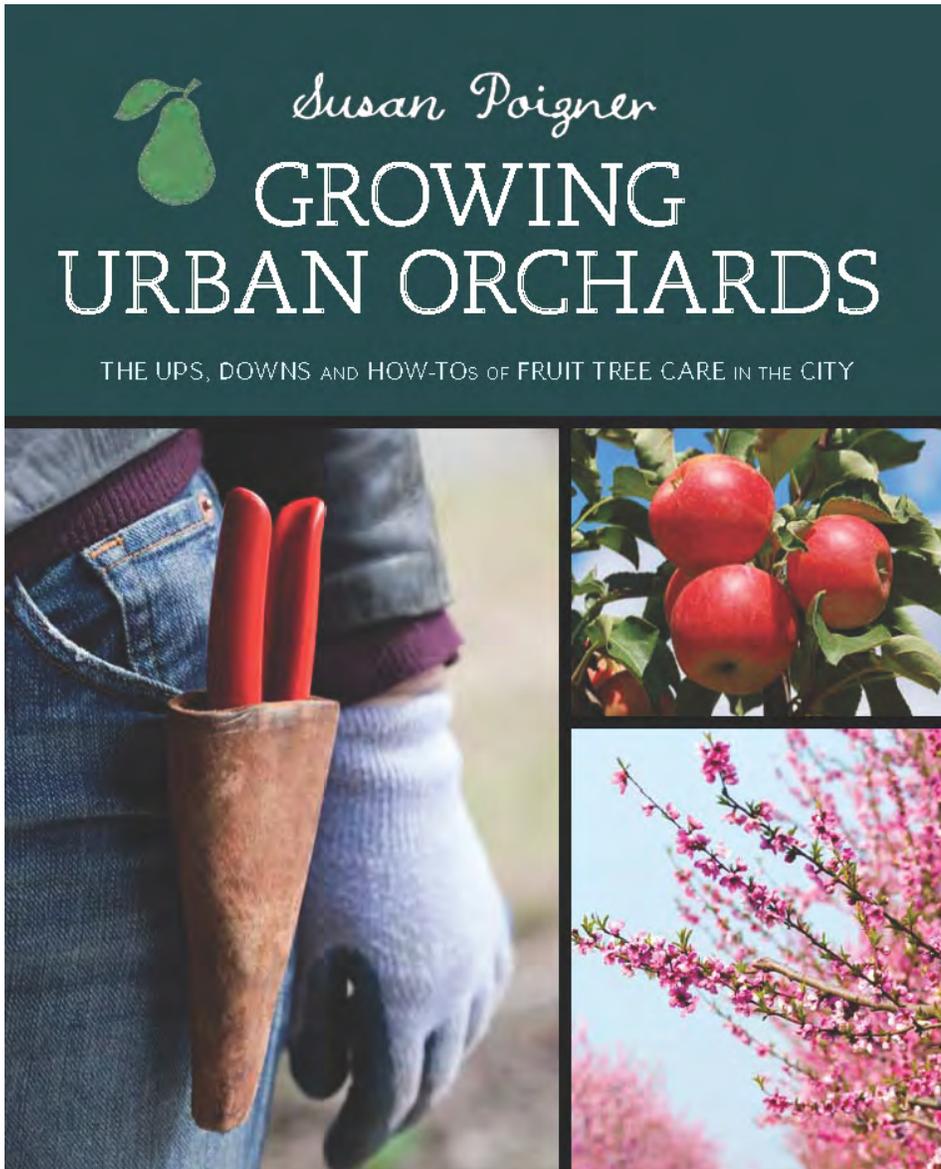
So many people assume that growing fruit trees is easy. You just plant your tree, water it, and wait for the harvest. The truth is that once your tree is in the ground there still is some work to do to keep it healthy. Make an effort to learn the key fruit tree care skills – including how to evaluate your site and research your trees, correct planting and young tree care, winter and summer pruning, pest and disease prevention, and soil and nutrition management.

What you will discover is that the better you care for your trees, the more they will give back to you – by providing you and your family with an abundant harvest that you can enjoy for many years to come.

FRUIT TREE CARE TRAINING:

- Investigate the websites of your local extension office (in the USA) or your provincial ministry of agriculture (in Canada).
- Check if your local community orchard or fruit-harvesting project holds workshops or organize one yourself!
- Sign up for a comprehensive series of fruit tree care workshops online at www.orchardpeople.com and earn a Certificate in Fruit Tree Care. For \$99.95 you will have access to the workshops for a year with discounts for community orchard groups of up to 50%. Email info@orchardpeople.com for more information.

SUGGESTED READING



GROWING URBAN ORCHARDS: THE UPS, DOWNS AND HOW-TOS OF FRUIT TREE CARE IN THE CITY

by Susan Poizner,
Orchard People, 2014

\$9.95 for eBook

\$19.95 for soft cover

Available now at www.orchardpeople.com

grants for school & community orchards

- **Tree Canada (Canada Only)**

<https://treecanada.ca/en/programs/edible-trees/>

- **Fruit Tree Foundation (Around the world)**

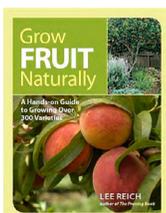
<http://www.ftpf.org/>

- **ACTrees (Canada & USA)**
<http://actrees.org/>
Click on cover to read **Community GrovesSM Guidebook**

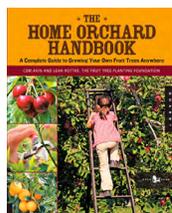


OTHER EXCELLENT BOOKS

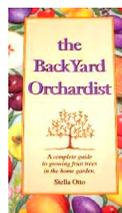
For a full list of excellent fruit tree care books visit: www.orchardpeople.com/books



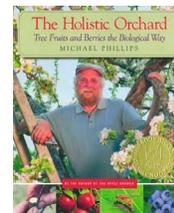
GROW FRUIT NATURALLY
A HANDS-ON GUIDE TO LUSCIOUS, HOMEGROWN FRUIT
by Lee Reich



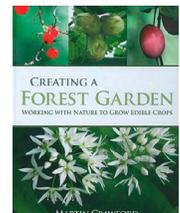
THE HOME ORCHARD HANDBOOK:
A COMPLETE GUIDE TO GROWING YOUR OWN FRUIT TREES ANYWHERE
by Cem Akin and Leah Rotke



THE BACKYARD ORCHARDIST:
A COMPLETE GUIDE TO GROWING FRUIT TREES IN THE HOME GARDEN
by Stella Otto



THE HOLISTIC ORCHARD:
TREE FRUITS AND BERRIES THE BIOLOGICAL WAY
by Michael Phillips



CREATING A FOREST GARDEN:
WORKING WITH NATURE TO GROW EDIBLE CROPS
by Martin Crawford



about the author

Susan Poizner is a writer, educational filmmaker and gardener. She is also one of the founders of the Ben Nobleman Park Community Orchard in Toronto, Canada, which was planted in 2009. Susan is the author of the award winning fruit tree care book *Growing Urban Orchards* and the creator of OrchardPeople.com's award winning online fruit tree care training program.

Susan's book and online workshops were recognized by the Garden Writers Association in 2014, when they each received a GWA Media Awards Silver Award of Achievement." Susan is also the director of fruit tree care and consulting company Orchard People that helps homeowners, community groups, and others to plant and care for fruit trees in Toronto, Canada and beyond.

CONTACT SUSAN

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 Meet Susan by watching this video at vimeo.com/104739637



▲ Susan Poizner teaching a workshop at Evergreen Brickworks in Toronto

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growing fruit trees that thrive

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notes:
