

# Organic fruit tree care

Our home orchards may be affected by a range of different pest and disease issues. All of which can be remedied using chemical-free methods.

Firstly the best way to prevent problems with fruit trees is to make sure the tree is growing healthily. A healthy tree is naturally more resilient to pest and disease problems than a weak tree. That means we have to get our soils right, in particular drainage and PH.

We also need to pay attention to the way we manage our fruit trees. A number of factors may affect the pest and disease status of your orchard, including variety, irrigation methods, mulching habits, feeding and pruning techniques and so on. Briefly though, if you try to avoid overhead irrigation, mulch well, offer your trees a balanced diet and remove and dispose of diseased plant matter diligently, you will be heading in the right direction.

As a last resort however, and if our trees are suffering a major pest or disease issue, we can remedy this promptly to reduce infestation and spread by using organic sprays. There are a number of multi-use sprays that you can either prepare yourself or purchase to tackle the majority of common fruit tree problems. These include horticultural oils, white oil, lime-sulphur, milk sprays and bordeaux to name a few.

Most problems that the home orchardist faces can be overcome without the use of harsh chemicals and success can be achieved with less fuss than many expect. If you can be observant and treat your fruit trees well you can have plentiful supplies of fresh organic fruit for much of the year. And won't the kids love that!

**By Drew Cooper from Edible Gardens Design, Landscaping & Education.**



# Going organic

Over the past few decades the Australian organic movement has grown into a major component of Australian agricultural production. Thus delivering benefits not only to consumers but to the environment as well.

A life-long gardener, Don Burke pioneered lifestyle television in Australia with 'Burke's Backyard'. In the introduction to his latest book, 'Organic', Don talks about his family background and how he always looked forward to spending time helping his grandfather in his vegetable garden during the school holidays.

Don began growing his own vegetables as a six year old. "I planted radishes and they grew up quickly", he said. "I can still remember the superb taste of my first crop and how proud I was when I took some inside and presented them to the family".

A long time advocate for the banning of the DDT family of chemicals in Australian agriculture, for many years Don has also been pushing issues such as effective regulations for labelling 'organic' fertilizers. In fact on one segment of 'Burke's Backyard' the results of his own research into blood and bone products (one product tested contained neither) led to significant changes in Australian law.

While beautifully produced, 'Organic' is not just a glossy 'coffee table' publication. It is a well written, informative and comprehensive guide to creating your very own herb, fruit and vegetable store! The reader is taken 'step by step' through the whole process from preparing the soil to harvesting their crop. It includes real life 'case histories', handy hints and great recipes. There is even a section on how to make your own scarecrow!

Published in hard-cover by New Holland and priced at \$29.95 'Organic' is available from all good bookshops.

An Alternative Voice

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