

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Haskap Pruning Basics

Pruning is an important part of bushberry management. Like many other bushberry crops, it is important to prune mature haskap plants to increase yields and fruit quality while improving plant vigour and harvesting efficiency. In Ontario, pruning usually occurs on dormant plants (January-March). The later the pruning activities can be scheduled, the easier it will be to identify winter damaged material for removal. Pruning can also be performed after the plants have broken dormancy if needed (i.e. typically by mid or late-April in Ontario) which can make it easier to determine if branches have winter damage or are diseased and need to be removed. Avoid pruning in the late summer or early fall as this practice can promote the development of new, tender, growth which is more susceptible to winter damage.

Summary guidelines for pruning haskaps:

- Only prune established, mature plants that are at least 4 years old.
- Haskaps fruit on one-year old wood. Be mindful when pruning to leave as much one-year old wood on the plant where possible.
- Practice renewal thinning every year in combination with more aggressive pruning every 3-4 years.
- Do not remove more than 25% of the plant canopy in any one year.
 - Aim to remove one in four to one in six branches from the base on multi-stem varieties.
 - Some varieties have a central trunk and therefore only require pruning and thinning of upper branches.
- Remove dead or diseased branches.
- Remove branches in the centre of the plant to increase light infiltration into the canopy.
- Remove lower branches from the sides of the plant that crown towards the ground.
 - This minimizes fruit losses, increases fruit quality, and increases harvest ease from remaining branches.

From a practical approach, it's usually easiest to prune the main branches first and then remove side branches that crown down to the ground. After these two steps have been completed, begin thinning the remaining canopy until you are satisfied with the shape and openness of the plant. If you are new to pruning, it will take time on the first few plants to become comfortable with how to approach pruning and how much material to remove from the plant. Pruning will become faster and easier as you work through the planting.

For additional information related to haskap production in Ontario please visit the ON Specialty Crops blog at www.onspecialtycrops.wordpress.com

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