

Olive Crop Load Management by Secondary Pruning

Why is crop management necessary?

This Fact Sheet addresses a very heavy flowering and fruit set, when it is necessary to undertake some crop thinning to:

1. enable the trees to carry abundant crops
2. maintain growth and development to ensure the potential for adequate return flowering the next year
3. manage the capacity for the trees to satisfactorily mature such heavy crops.

Your grove needs to maintain the capacity for continued new vegetative growth to support the developing fruit and to ensure flower potential for next year. Whilst you might see a fantastic fruit set and crop potential, expert advice is the trees may need to have some crop reduction for ensuring fruit development and to lock in next year's flowering.

What is secondary pruning?

Secondary pruning targets around the periphery of the trees trying to reduce fruit load by 10-15% (at a guess!). Specifically remove lumps of pendant growth which incidentally will have the least new vegetative growth because of its pendant nature. This is a simple task using a pole saw making about 3 – 5 cuts per tree depending on the trees of course. This approach also adds to the likely increase in harvested yield because you are specifically removing canopy that does not shake well. At the same time you may need to remove clumps of growth low in the centre of the tree to improve light.

The photographs on the next pages show 'before' and 'after' images of three of trees thinned/pruned. The job takes about 4 – 5 minutes a tree. The photographs have included the prunings removed in the images so you can see pruning intensity. Typically branches to remove may be about 2-4 cm in diameter. Limbs should be pruned off at their base where they emerged from the supporting branch. No stubs should be left if possible. This allows improvement of the structure of trees towards single axis major limbs which are the best format for ease of shaking.

At the same time you may wish to consider pruning to minimise the impact of frost. Any low hanging branches should be cut off so that there is at least a clear metre between laden branches and the ground. You will need to do this for mechanical harvesting too (see Fact Sheet 1).

Summary

In summary, you should critically review the fruit set on your groves and if it looks like one of your heavier potential crops, then the secondary thinning/pruning is strongly recommended.

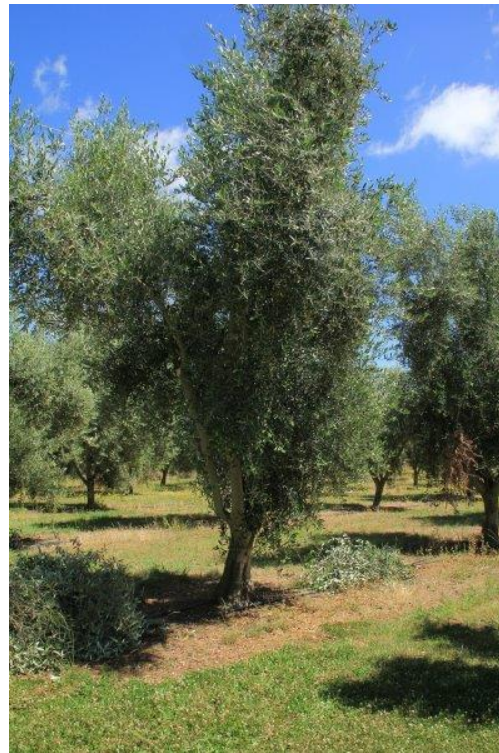
Remember the underlying mantra is about tree management. You must be looking at the 'next three years' at any one time, not just the next crop. This is a crucial point in the renovation of your groves and you will see the benefits of healthier groves with lower disease incidence and responses in flowering and fruit set. You must ensure that you set up the groves for year-on-year high crops. That means they must farm for next year's flowers as well as the next crop.

Canopy Management Fact Sheet 2

Before



After



Canopy Management Fact Sheet 2

Before



After

