



## Selling Backyard Orchard Culture

(Accompanies *What Is Backyard Orchard Culture?*)

### TIMES HAVE CHANGED, CUSTOMERS HAVE CHANGED

Families today have less space in their yards for fruit trees, and don't use as much fruit for canning and cooking as in the past. The potential demand for fresh fruit, however, has probably never been greater. The ideal home orchard today is one that provides usable amounts of tree-ripe fruit over a long season.

In BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE this is accomplished by planting close together several or many fruit varieties which ripen at different times, keeping the trees small by summer pruning.

### BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE MEANS NEW IDEAS, NEW GOALS, AND BETTER RESULTS

In today's society, all areas of human endeavor are alive with new ideas and new knowledge; there are improved techniques for doing practically everything.' People are stimulated by encountering that which is new, better, improved, interesting, unique - that which offers new possibilities, new options, new ways to deal with limitations.

Most of the ideas of BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE are not really new, but are in need of re-discovery and creative application. The ideas that go into selling BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE are those which help customers to deal positively with limitations (perceived and real) of time, space, and know-how.

### MASTER THE PRINCIPLES OF BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE

To be successful in applying to fruit tree sales the principles of BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE, you must first master them:

1. BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE isn't commercial orchard culture. It isn't ladders, tractors, forklifts, and eighteen tons of fruit per acre. Trees aren't planted twenty feet apart.
2. BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE is high-density planting: lots of trees in a small area. It is the planting of hedgerows, espaliers, four trees in one hole, and multiplebudded trees.
3. BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE is successive ripening: one variety after another - fruit all season long.
4. BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE is summer pruning for size control. Dwarfing rootstocks can't do the whole job - tree size is the grower's responsibility. Choose a size and don't let the tree get any bigger.
5. BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE is an ongoing dialogue between backyard orchardist and nursery professional.
6. BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE is not being lazy or intimidated by pruning, thinning, and spraying. **It is an attitude: "just do it!"**
7. BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE is the satisfaction of producing and the pleasure of sharing tree-ripe fruit.

### INCREASE YOUR SHARE OF FRUIT TREE SALES BY INSPIRING THE NOVICE

Probably 75 % to 80 % of your customers are novice gardeners. To increase your market share, you must distinguish your nursery from others by introducing the novice to new ideas, new possibilities.

Let them know that their limitations may not be what they think. Challenge them to the philosophy and techniques of BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE - challenge them to try high-density planting and summer pruning. Inspire them to want a full season of tree-ripe fruit.

### INCREASE YOUR SHARE OF FRUIT TREE SALES BY INSPIRING THE MISINFORMED

How many people aren't buying fruit trees and maintenance supplies from you because the fruit trees they now have are huge and the fruit makes a big mess? They need to know about BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE! People who think they don't have room for fruit trees, or who think fruit trees are hard to maintain, or who don't know the difference between grocery store fruit and tree-ripe fruit, or who think they would have to put up 100 jars of fruit to justify having another tree - all need to know about BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE!

### GOOD SALES INTERACTIONS WILL INCREASE YOUR SHARE OF FRUIT TREE SALES

Fruit tree customers are not impulse shoppers; they are going to buy - the question is where. After shopping several nurseries, they will either buy at the last place they stop, at the one with the cheapest price, or where they feel most comfortable with the sales interaction. Here are some ways to begin a good sales interaction:

1. Find out what kinds of fruit they have in mind. If they are interested in a peach tree, ask them if they would like to have peaches for ten to twelve weeks instead of just two or three. Tell them they can plant four trees in one hole. (You should be ready to suggest four peaches that ripen at different times. Or three peaches and a nectarine. Or two peaches, a nectarine and a plum.)
2. Ask them how much space they have for fruit trees. If they have a 10' x 15' area and they're wondering if that's enough room for one tree, tell them it's easily enough room for six trees: four in one hole and two espaliers.
3. Ask them if they are aware they can keep fruit trees under eight feet high by summer pruning.
4. If they have a 10' x 30' area, tell them they could have fruit for six months by planting twelve trees 30 inches apart in a hedgerow, or by planting three sets of four trees in one hole.
5. Customers who are experienced at growing fruit and resist the high density approach should be, in fact, good candidates for BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE. Are they able to use the entire crops from their trees, or would they rather have the harvest spread over a longer period. Do they have to use a ladder for pruning, thinning and picking? Do they always get those tasks done? Would they like them to be easier? Inspire them to want lots of varieties of fruit in their yard, including some of the exciting new varieties. Challenge them to extend their experience by mastering the art of summer pruning, and by maintaining a fruit tree under eight feet high.
6. Frequently, a customer comes to the nursery for a single fruit tree not realizing that it requires a pollenizer. This is a good point of entry into the discussion of BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE. If the customer says there's no room for a second tree, the sales person can explain why there is probably room for three or four and maybe six or eight trees! Or two multiple-budded trees with six or eight varieties!

**A good sales interaction informs, introduces, challenges, inspires, and, most importantly, begins a long-term relationship.**

## BE SURE YOUR CUSTOMERS UNDERSTAND PRUNING

Lots of delicious fruit from small trees is the customer's motivation for adopting BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE. Pruning, especially summer pruning, is the key to the customer's success. The customer's success is the key to good word-of-mouth advertising and increased sales for your nursery.

1. FRUIT TREE SIZE CONTROL IS THE CUSTOMER'S RESPONSIBILITY. The customer chooses a size and doesn't let the tree get any bigger.
2. MAKE SURE YOUR CUSTOMERS UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR PRUNING. Pruning is required to stimulate new fruiting wood, to remove dead and disease limbs, to space the fruit, and to ensure good air circulation and sunlight penetration. Pruning is most important in the first three years. A good time to prune is when you thin the crop.
3. MAKE SURE YOUR CUSTOMERS UNDERSTAND THE BENEFITS OF SUMMER PRUNING. Summer pruning reduces trees' vigor. Summer pruning is the easiest way to keep trees small.
4. MAKE SURE YOUR CUSTOMERS AREN'T INTIMIDATED BY PRUNING. It isn't complicated or confusing if you know why you are doing it.
5. ASK YOUR CUSTOMERS TO CONSULT YOU WHEN THEY HAVE A QUESTION. Consultation is essential: you need to know what the questions are, you want them to be successful, and you want their repeat business.

## INCREASE YOUR SALES BY SELLING BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE

When promoting high-density planting, start with the most aggressive (most profitable) strategies: four trees in one hole, or a hedgerow with 30 inches between trees. Then, if the customer is not receptive, work toward lower density: two trees in one hole, or trees six to eight feet apart in a row.

The way to maximize the day's sales is to maximize the sale to each customer (but without being pushy - the ultimate goal is the repeat customer).

The principles of BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE offer numerous ways to inspire your customers and increase your fruit tree sales. Find your own creative ways to employ the following:

1. Trees can be kept as small as desired by summer pruning.
2. With small trees pruning, spraying, thinning, netting and picking is easy.
3. With small trees, small yards can accommodate more trees in more places than most people realize.
4. With high-density planting and successive ripening, small yards can provide a longer harvest of more kinds of fruit than most people realize.
5. With multiple-budded fruit trees, up to four varieties of fruit can be harvested from one tree.
6. It's easy to grow fruit trees flat against a wall or fence.

## PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO CREATING SALES OPPORTUNITIES

The more a sales person knows about a product, the more ways there are to sell it. In many sales interactions, opportunities come and go quickly. At the busy times of the year, there isn't as much time to spend with each customer - not as much time to look things up. Yet sales often depend on answers to questions and timely suggestions. The sales person who is most informed will make the most out of a five or ten-minute sales interaction.

## SELL THE EXCITEMENT OF NEW VARIETIES

One of the most exciting aspects of growing and tasting fruit is the never-ending stream of new fruit varieties. Many varieties introduced five, ten, or even twenty years ago are still unfamiliar to most of the public, and therefore still "new." There are still plenty of people who don't know about Fuji, Gala, Empire and Sierra Beauty apples, Stella cherry, Burgundy and Weeping Santa Rosa plums, Sprite cherry-plum, Frost™ and O'Henry peaches, Harcot apricot, Heavenly White and Mericrest nectarines, Necta Zee miniature nectarine, or Asian pears.

New varieties don't sell themselves. Sales people should be alert for all opportunities to share the excitement of new varieties. A customer who likes sweet fruit with no tartness should be told about the new super-sweet, low-acid white flesh nectarines (Arctic Rose and Arctic Queen). And, of course, any customer interested in plums or apricots should be introduced to the Aprium® and Pluot®!

## BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE SELLS NEW VARIETIES

With high-density planting and summer pruning, most people who come in looking for a Santa Rosa plum also have plenty of room for the a Pluot®. And most people wanting an Elberta peach also have room for the earlier Double Jewel peach, plus the later Tra Zee peach, plus a Heavenly White nectarine!

## SELLING BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE MEANS SELLING TREE-RIPE FRUIT

Customers who don't grow fruit or only want one fruit tree perhaps think they don't like many kinds of fruit. Maybe that's because they've never experienced tree-ripe fruit. How many people are there who would become fruit tree enthusiasts if only they would be introduced to the world of tree-ripe fruit?

## DON'T ALLOW YOUR OWN BIASES IN FRUIT BE A NEGATIVE IN SELLING

In selling fruit trees, personal experience can be very helpful in making recommendations. Be careful, however, that you don't put too much weight on your own negative experiences with fruit.

People have different tastes; it's surprising how varied the responses can be to a given fruit sample. Some people don't like any tartness in fruit, while others do. Some people are more sensitive to subtle flavors than others. People have varied experiences and different expectations.

Also, opinions derived from commercially harvested fruit may not be relevant. Fruit in grocery stores, fruit stands and farmers' markets often has been picked before fully ripe, in order to handle without bruising. How and where fruit is grown and when it is picked can matter as much or more than the variety!

## SELL THE TASTE TEST WINNERS

Sales people aren't always able to taste test new varieties for themselves. Important new tools in the sales person's product knowledge library are the FRUIT TASTING REPORTS from Dave Wilson Nursery.

Sell your peers' fruit taste ratings. **Sell the 1993-94 taste test winners: Flavor Supreme Pluot®, Arctic Supreme white peach, Loring peach, Heavenly White nectarine, Weeping Santa Rosa plum, Fantasia nectarine, Double Delight nectarine, Arctic Rose white nectarine, Independence nectarine, and Mid-Pride peach.**

## EVEN SINGLE-TREE CUSTOMERS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO SUMMER PRUNE

The key to developing long-term customers is promoting positive fruit tree experiences. Smaller trees are easier to spray, prune, thin, net, and harvest. A customer who learns how easy it is to keep a tree small by summer pruning will see that there is room for more trees after all.

**Even in the shortest of sales interactions, customers should be informed or reminded that they can plant trees close together and keep them small by summer pruning.**

## SELL WITH A PLAN, BE A PROFESSIONAL

Leading a customer to the fruit trees and helping them read the labels isn't much of a plan. Learn different ways to begin and guide conversations about high-density planting, successive ripening and summer pruning.

Conduct yourself in a professional manner. Take advantage of all opportunities to expand your product knowledge. Be accurate and reliable with information. Be a good listener, learn how your customers think, learn what ideas elicit a positive response from them. Learn to make the most out of every sales interaction. Always keep your promises.

Set goals for yourself - product knowledge goals, daily or weekly sales goals, competitive goals (sell more fruit trees than someone else), interaction goals (think up and practice new techniques to interest people in BACKYARD ORCHARD CULTURE). Discuss horticultural sales with other nursery professionals.

When ending any discussion with a customer, feel confident that you have planted seeds for further thought. Sometimes customers aren't responsive to ideas until they've had time to think about them. Let them know you're there to help in any way you can.

Suggestion: your nursery should prepare recommended high-density planting combinations for your climate. Four-trees-in-one-hole combination: four fruit varieties that ripen at different times. Maybe several four-trees-in-one-hole combinations. You should also have a recommended ten-tree hedgerow combination with ten different ripening times. Most customers would be more responsive to a suggested combination than to the prospect of doing it themselves. It's easier to modify than to start from scratch. The more help you give your customers, the more likely they are to follow through.

**Selling with a plan means more sales, and more opportunities for long-term customers.**



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19701 Lake Rd \* Hickman, CA 95323 .

1-800.654.5854

209.874.1821

fax--209.874.1920

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