After a busy harvest season, there are still several jobs to be done and one of those important jobs is pruning.

The tools used for pruning can include loppers, hand-held shears, pole pruners and saws. Many of these tools have sharp edges, and pinch points. Examples of injuries that can occur during pruning work include falls, lacerations, slips, head/eye injuries, strain to shoulder/back, and repetitive motion injuries.

Here are some recommendations to help reduce the risk of injuries during this year's pruning activities:

1. **Owner's Guide** - Before using pruning tools, the user should be fully trained on the equipment and should read and understand the operation and safety procedures in the operator's manual provided by the manufacturer.

2. **Inspection** - All tools and equipment should be inspected prior to using to make sure everything is functioning properly (e.g., blades sharpened, parts lubricated, etc.).

3. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** - Use the appropriate PPE, which may include well-fitting leather or other work-type gloves, long-sleeved shirt, long pants, sturdy shoes, and hearing protection/protective eyewear (e.g., when using hydraulic saws or loppers).

4. **Tool Choice** - Choose the tool that is right for the job that you need to complete.

5. **Weather** - Dress for weather conditions, including layers of clothing in the winter to prevent cold-weather related conditions like frostbite. On bright winter days, sunscreen should be applied to your face. Avoid using electric pruning tools or equipment in rainy, wet or dangerous weather conditions.

6. **Ladder Safety** - Follow recommendations on ladder placement, maximum load rating, proper ladder height, and maintenance. Choose the right type of ladder for the job (e.g., tripod ladder for orchard use).

7. **Repetitive Tasks** - Reduce the risk of muscle and joint injuries by taking short, frequent breaks when completing repetitive tasks and by doing stretches before, during, and after work. Consider using battery-powered electric hand shears which distribute the weight more evenly.

8. **Power Line** - Be aware of power lines and never prune a tree or branches yourself if it is within 10 feet of power lines. It is recommended that a professional tree service prune or trim branches or trees within 10 feet of power lines.

9. **Slips and Falls** - Reduce the risk of slips and falls by using the 3 points of contact when using a ladder and not over-extending your reach by keeping your trunk within the side rails.

10. **Emergency Plan** - An emergency plan should be in place in the case of an incident. First aid kits should be easily accessible and the crew leader should be trained in first aid.

As you begin pruning, follow these safety reminders. **The last reminder is to always know where your other hand is located when holding a branch and cutting with your other hand.**

**Resources**

This downloadable fact sheet was developed for Penn State Extension Bilingual Tractor Safety Trainings for Specialty Crop Growers, with support from Specialty Crop Block Grant #ME44187248.

Authors

Linda Fetzer
Extension Associate
lmf8@psu.edu
814-865-4582

extension.psu.edu

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