

## **Fruit Session Q&A**

**I live in Huntsville with 89 frost free days. Planted a European Plum (Italian Prune) in 6/2021. Had a full tree of fruit for the first time this year, but all the fruit fell before ripening. What can I do to prevent this from happening this year?**

A couple of thoughts, could it have been because it was too dry and therefore the tree aborted the fruit to save it self? Did it have insects get into the fruit and therefore it fell off? Most of the time when all of the fruit falls off the tree it is because of a condition that triggers it.

**Where can we get the small bags?**

Goggle Japanese fruit bags, or apple bags on the internet. There are lots of options via amazon—here is one that I found that is a more “traditional” Japanese Fruit Bag:

[https://www.wilsonirr.com/catalog\\_i4342079-catId-121632.html](https://www.wilsonirr.com/catalog_i4342079-catId-121632.html)

**Is it a good or bad idea to interplant between fruit tree specimens (within the row) with pollinator plants or to have several pollinator patches nearby the orchard, or both?**

One thing you will need to watch out for is if you put on cover spray for insects and disease pest that you dont get over spray onto other plants or the neighboring fruit especially if it is close to harvesting since it would have a post harvest window. I made this mistake in our demonstration orchard with putting early ripening apples next to late season apples and needing to put on a cover spray on the late tree and not get over spray on the early tree because I put the trees in the demonstration orchard by name instead of by ripening order.

**Do you have any recommendations for controlling or getting rid of gophers? We are growing apples, apricots, peaches, and pears. The gophers prefer the apple roots. They are also attacking the drip irrigation flex pipe, especially the pipe extruded with peanut oil.**

<https://extension.usu.edu/crops/research/pocket-gophers>

The gophinator traps worked really well. We were able to remove all gophers on one acre in about a week. But you can use a bait probe to stick strychnine into their burrows, it works the best, zinc phosphide works best

**Can you discuss and give an opinion on using a Silvopasture with fruit trees?**

You can use any animal under the trees as long as they do not damage the roots or trunks of the trees. Horses are notorious for damaging the trunks of trees when they are bored. Once the damage is done, it is hard for them to recover from it.

### **How do you go about removing or replacing grass in a small or residential orchard?**

in a conventional system you may need to use glyphosphate, usually most effective in the spring when there is 6 inches of growth. If organic or desired not to use herbicides, you will need to use tillage to terminate, plastic tarping for a period of time may help prevent regrowth. The follow with planting the desired cover which will hopefully compete well against regrowth of the grass

### **My peaches split at the pit when I thinned them heavily**

This is generally related to too much water movement into the fruit during a stage of growth called pit hardening (stage 2). Peaches display three phases of growth. Stage 1 is rapid growth, they slow down during pit hardening, and then resume growth during stage 3. When you thin them heavily you have less fruit for the same amount of water to go into so that is forcing too much water into the fruit. Thinning later or decreasing your irrigation (shorter duration of irrigation) might help decrease pit splitting

### **Is nuisance removal an option for deer?**

Usually not, sometimes the DWR will authorize it, and sometimes they will personally come remove them. The meat is usually donated to the community. Talk to the division, they have options. Make sure you document damage, use game cameras, pictures, pictures, pictures

### **I was told that deer won't jump a 6 foot fence if they can't see what's on the other side. Is that true?**

Yes, usually if they can't see over it, or some fences will have a "3-D" look to them that discourages jumping, but a deer can jump more than 6 feet

### **What about the invasive fox squirrel?**

I will be honest that I don't have any experience with the fox squirrel, however, they are similar to the red squirrel in what they eat. You should be able to have success with box style traps baiting with grain and fruits. Peanut butter is great, but be aware that you can attract skunks with most bait that squirrels eat.

They are a non-native species, so they are not regulated, and you will be doing native species a favor if you control their populations. If you can find the nests, then you know exactly where to place traps.

[https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3146&context=extension\\_curall](https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3146&context=extension_curall)

I would recommend placing a tube trap or a connibear trap high in the tree close to the nest that they can run through, I would bait some of them and not bait the others to see what is working best