



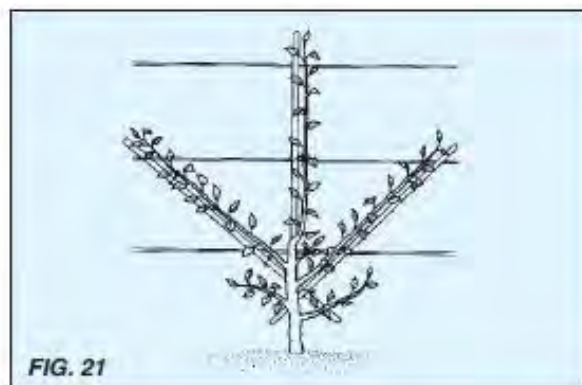
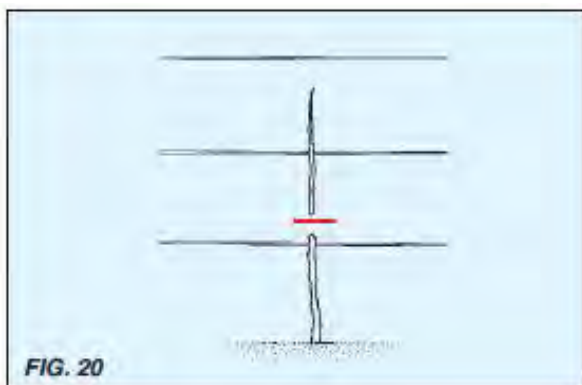
Ken Muir's Guide To Fan Training Plum, Gage, Damson & Cherry Plum Trees

This is the best form to train stone fruits where space is limited, especially in colder districts. A fan-trained tree on St. Julien 'A' needs a space of at least 4.5m (15ft) wide and 2.1-2.4m (7-8ft) high. Trees should be planted 15-23cm (6-9in) away from the wall or fence and the stem inclined slightly towards it. The wall should be fitted with horizontal wires 15cm (6in) apart.

During the first three years the pruning of a plum fan is the same as for a peach fan and should only be undertaken in the spring and summer. This procedure also applies to cherries.

THE FIRST YEAR

Where a maiden whip is used (a tree without side shoots), cut back the central stem in April, following planting, to a bud at about 60cm (2ft) from the ground ensuring that there are two more good buds below on either side, facing parallel with the wall. These will form the first two ribs (see fig. 20). In early to midsummer, once the two laterals have formed, cut back the central stem to the uppermost lateral. Train the two shoots along canes fixed to the wires at 45°. Pinch back any other shoot on the main stem to one or two leaves (see fig. 21).



Where a feathered maiden is used (a tree with side shoots), cut back the central stem in April following planting, to the uppermost of five strong laterals growing parallel with the fence on alternate sides of the main stem. The topmost should be about 60cm (2ft) above the ground.

Prune the bottom four selected shoots back to the first upward facing bud, leaving the topmost lateral unpruned (see fig. 33). In the early summer, choose three strong shoots. Train the top one vertically, one to the left and one to the right. Cut back all other buds and shoots (see fig. 34). In June, tie the lengthening side shoots to canes set at an angle of 45° to the horizontal. In the late summer remove the central shoot and paint the cut with a wound paint to avoid infection (see fig. 35). This method usually produces the best result.

Alternatively, for a quicker result, the main stem of a feathered maiden can be cut back to two strong laterals (one on either side). The two selected laterals should be shortened to 30-45cm (12-18in) from the main stem. These will form the first two ribs, and effectively saves one year (see fig. 36). The tree can now be treated as a two year old.



FIG. 33

During April a feathered maiden should be cut back to a lateral about 60cm (2ft) from the ground, leaving two good laterals on each side. These four laterals should be cut back to one bud.

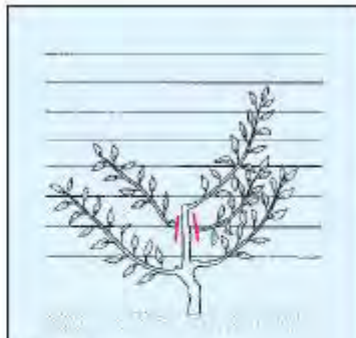


FIG. 34

During the early part of the summer, three shoots should be selected. The uppermost one should be trained vertically and the other two, trained left and right. All other buds or shoots should be removed.

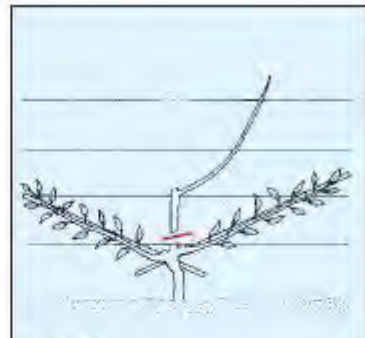


FIG. 35

In June the lengthening side shoots should be tied to canes fixed at an angle of 45° to the horizontal. In September the central shoot should be removed, painting the cut with a wound paint.

THE SECOND YEAR

The following April the ribs should be cut back by about half, each to an upward facing bud (see fig. 36). During the summer the leaders are tied to the canes. Two more shoots spaced 10-15cm (4-6in) apart on the upper side of each rib and one below should be selected and tied in as they grow. Any shoots growing inwards towards the wall should be rubbed out. Any other shoots should be pinched back to one to two leaves (see fig. 37).

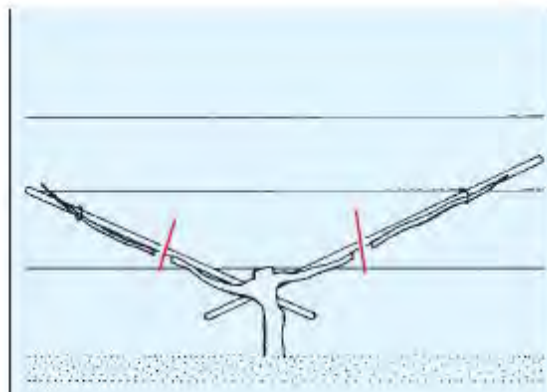


FIG. 36

In April of the second year the two side shoots are cut back to an upward facing bud at 30-45cm (12-18in) from the main stem protecting the cuts with a wound paint.

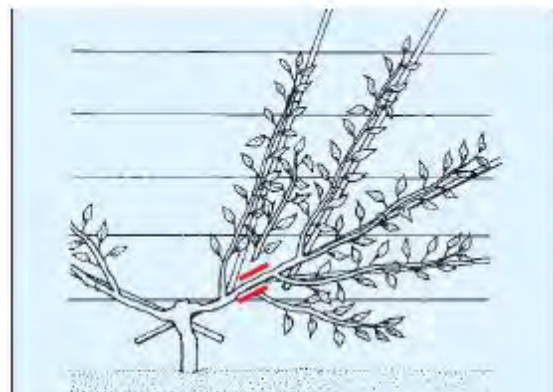


FIG. 37

The following summer four shoots are selected on each branch, one to extend the existing rib, two equally spaced on the upper side and one on the lower side. All other shoots are stopped at one leaf.

THE THIRD YEAR ONWARDS

In April of the third year, the ribs should be cut back by one third to a half of the previous summer's growth (see fig. 38). This process is repeated until the required area against the wall is filled.

In the summer, the leading shoots on each rib are allowed to extend (see fig. 39). Train three shoots on each branch to extend the framework and tie to bamboo canes every 10cm (4in). Any shoots growing inwards towards the wall should be rubbed out. Any other shoots not required for the framework should

have their growing points pinched once they have made six leaves. Any sub laterals should be stopped at one leaf. Later in the summer, the pinched out shoots should be pruned back to three leaves to help develop fruit buds to form.

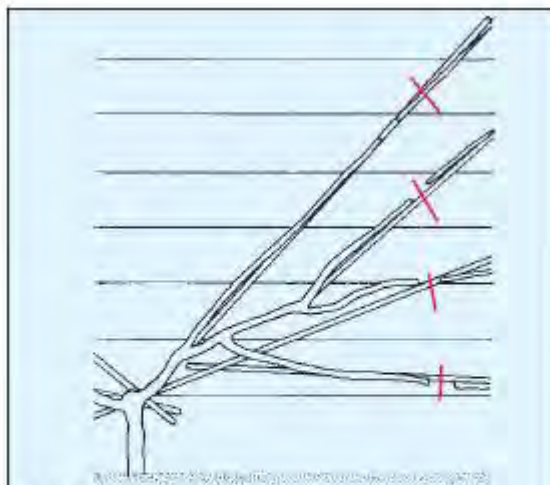


FIG. 38

In April, each leader should be shortened by one third to a downward pointing wood bud, ensuring that all cuts are protected with wound paint.



FIG. 39

During the summer the leading shoots on each rib are allowed to extend. Three shoots on each branch should be trained to extend the framework, tying them to bamboo canes every 10cm (4in).

PRUNING THE ESTABLISHED FAN

During the summer any shoots growing inwards towards the wall should be rubbed out as they appear. Any required to extend the fan are tied in. The remaining laterals need to be kept pinched back to six leaves (see fig. 40). After picking they should be shortened back to three leaves (see fig. 41). Any very vigorous vertical shoots must be removed entirely or bent over to fill a gap and any that are dead, diseased or making poor growth should be removed. As growth begins in the spring, any shoots growing directly towards or away from the fence should be rubbed out (see fig. 42).



FIG. 40

From late June to late July, new shoots should have their growing points pinched out when they have made six or seven leaves and are not wanted for the framework. This will result in the formation of a fruit-bearing spur system.

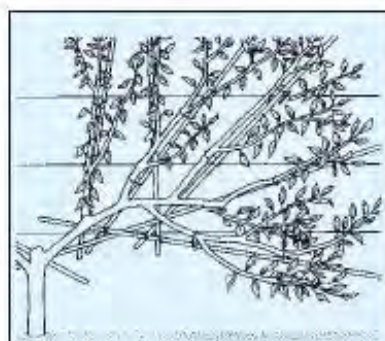


FIG. 41

After harvest, between mid-August and mid-September, the pinched-out shoots should be pruned back to three leaves to help develop fruit buds to form at their bases the following year.

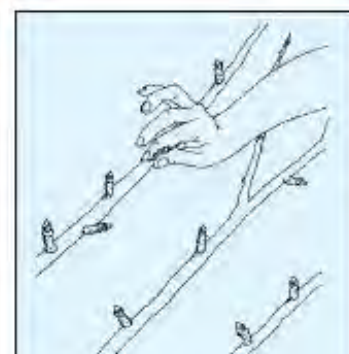


FIG. 42

From the fourth year onwards, as growth begins in the spring, side shoots growing directly towards the fence or outwards in the opposite direction should be rubbed out.