





vigorous varieties such as 'Marjorie's Seedling' as well as for upright side-branch growth at the top of the tree but not the central leader. The strings can be removed once the branches have set in position in late autumn. The aim should be to achieve a weeping habit to the tree as far as possible.

### *PRUNING IN SUBSEQUENT YEARS*

Once the desired height has been reached, the central leader should be pruned to 2.5cm (1in) in May. In late June, any vertical shoots competing with the central leader are removed. In late July the current season's growth should be pruned by shortening the branch leaders to 20cm (8in) to a downward facing bud (see fig. 30) and laterals to 15cm (6in).

## **MANURING**

In early February each year, broadcast over the rooting area:

15g/m<sup>2</sup> (1/2oz/yd<sup>2</sup>) of sulphate of potash, and 50g/m<sup>2</sup> (1 3/4oz/yd<sup>2</sup>) of sulphate of ammonia or Nitro-Chalk (calcium ammonium nitrate);

and every third year:  
70g/m<sup>2</sup> (2 1/2oz/yd<sup>2</sup>) of superphosphate.

Alternatively, a compound fertilizer may be used annually following the manufacturer's recommendations. The 'Ken Muir 'Fruit Tree, Cane, Vine & Bush Feed' is ideal for this.

## **PRUNING & TRAINING OF CORDONS**

Unlike Minarettes, cordons may need some initial pruning and training. Cordons should be planted at an angle of around 45° with the scion uppermost and should be spaced 75cm-90cm (2½-3ft) apart (see page 27). They are trained to canes fixed to horizontal wires 60cm (2ft) apart (three wires for a 1.8m [6ft] fence). They should ideally be orientated north-south. The trees should be planted with the top of each cordon inclined towards the north so the sun reaches all along their length. If an east-west orientation is unavoidable the cordons should be inclined towards the east.

Pruning should be delayed until March or April when the leading shoot should be pruned by one third to a suitable bud and any side shoots greater than 15cm (6in) in length should be pruned to three or four buds. Formative pruning is largely the same as for Minarettes.

### **FRUIT THINNING**

If there is a heavy crop, the fruits should be thinned when they are about hazelnut size and again when they are twice that size. Small, misshapen and diseased fruits should be removed to leave the rest 5-7.5cm (2-3in) apart or 10cm (4in) apart for large fruited varieties.

### **HARVESTING & STORAGE**

Plums should be picked when fully coloured and ripe, at which stage they part easily from the spur. It will be necessary to pick over the tree several times, as not all the fruit ripens at once. Fruit for bottling, jam or cooking should be picked when slightly under ripe but dessert fruit should be fully ripe. Most plums will not keep long and are best used straightaway. But some late plums can be stored; the variety 'Coe's Golden Drop' will keep up to a month if stored in a cool, dark place.