

# COBNUTS & FILBERTS

**C**obnuts and filberts are related species of hazelnut (*Corylus*). They are both small trees which bear separate male and female flowers on the same tree. The male flowers are the familiar catkins and the female flowers are small, red and unobtrusive. They are wind pollinated and two varieties are needed to ensure good cross-pollination and should be planted next to one another to aid this process.

The husk of the cobnut does not completely cover the nut, whereas the husk of the filbert completely envelops the nut which is longer and narrower than that of the cobnut. They are cultivated in the same way and will be referred to as cobnuts in the text.

## VARIETIES

**COSFORD** — This is a large, oblong cobnut with a short husk. It has bright yellow catkins and is a heavy cropper and good pollinator. It makes a vigorous tree. The flavour is good.

**KENTISH COB (LAMBERT'S FILBERT)** — Although called a cob, this is a filbert. It is a very long, large nut of good flavour. It has short, yellow/green catkins and is heavy cropping and moderately vigorous.

**RED FILBERT** — This filbert has striking long claret red catkins, rich purple foliage and delicious purple skinned fruits.



*Kentish Cob*



*Red Filbert (foliage)*

## SITE & SOIL

Cobnuts prefer a sheltered site and will grow on almost any well drained soil. They are lime tolerant and a pH of 7.5-8.0 is best. On acidic soils it may be necessary to apply lime to raise the pH. Poorer soils are preferable to rich soils which can lead to excessive growth.

## TREE FORM

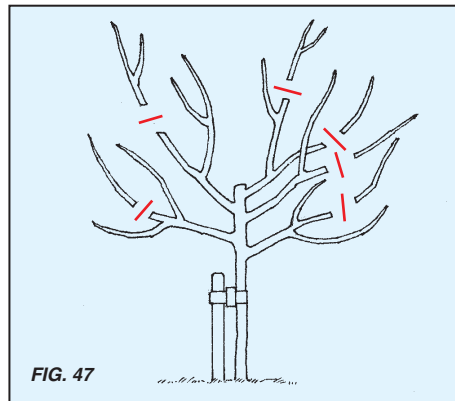
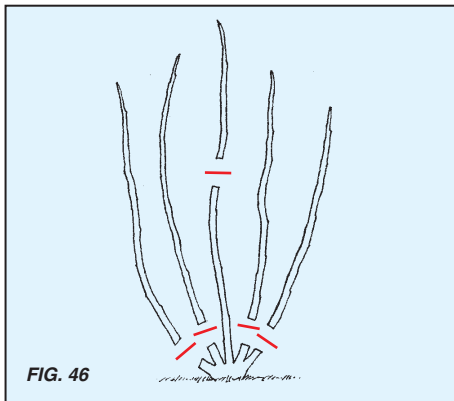
In their natural form, Cobnuts are multi-stemmed bushes. However, in order to control the suckers, they are best grown as open-centred bushes with a short 30-38cm (12-15in) stem and then a framework of six to eight branches. The trees should be kept down to a height of 1.8-2.4m (6-8ft) and should be spaced 4.5m (15ft) apart. They should only require staking for the first few years.

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## INITIAL TRAINING

If the bush comes from the nursery multi-stemmed, before planting, select a strong upright stem as the main leader and remove all other branches (see fig 46). The stem that has been selected will form the main trunk of the tree and should be cut back to a bud 30-38cm (12-15in) from ground level. In the second year, treat the bush as described below, (i.e. as if it has just come from the nursery as a single stem tree with branches coming off the main stem).

If the bush comes from the nursery as a single stem tree, with branches coming off the main stem, suitably placed leaders should be cut back by half to an outward facing bud after planting. Any laterals not required to form the framework should be cut back to three or four buds (see fig 47). This should be repeated each February for the first four or five years, aiming to produce six to eight good branches.



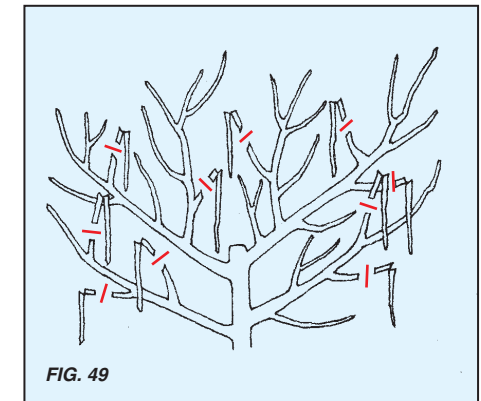
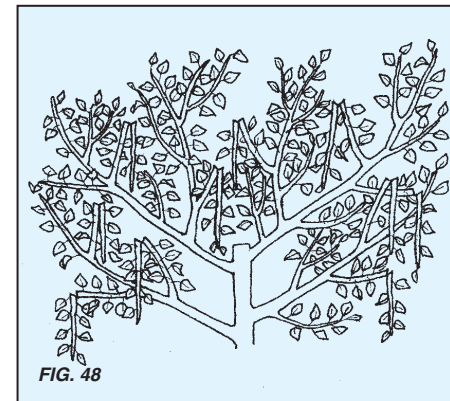
## WINTER PRUNING OF THE ESTABLISHED TREE

This should be carried out at flowering time in late February to help shed the pollen and improve fruit set. Strong laterals should be pruned to three or four buds. Weak laterals carrying the female flowers should not be pruned. Leaders should be pruned by half to an outward facing bud and if necessary, branches should be cut back to a suitably placed lateral to maintain the height at 1.8-2.4m (6-8ft).

## SUMMER PRUNING

This is known as 'brutting' and should be carried out in August. Strong lateral shoots should be broken at about half their length and left hanging (see fig 48). This improves air circulation and light penetration, reduces vigour and encourages fruit bud formation. These brutted side shoots should be shortened back to two or three buds in late February (see fig 49).

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## MANURING

In late January each year a compound fertilizer should be applied following the manufacturer's recommendations. The area to be covered should more or less equal that of the spread of the branches.

## HARVESTING & STORAGE

Cobnuts should be harvested when they are fully mature, usually in late September. The nuts should be picked when the husks start to turn yellow. They should be dried by spreading them out in a warm place and turning them every two or three days or by hanging them up in a net bag. When they are dry they should be de-husked and packed in earthenware jars or clay pots and stored in a cool, airy room or shed and protected against mice and squirrels.

## PESTS, DISEASES & DISORDERS

Squirrels are the most serious pest since they can quickly devour a whole crop. Netting is usually ineffective as they chew through it. Galvanised wire netting is effective but can lead to problems of zinc toxicity. The fruits can be attacked by nut gall mites, nut weevils and winter moth larvae. The trees are generally free from disease.