

GUIDE TO PRUNING & TRAINING MINARETTE STONE FRUITS (Plums, Gages, Damsons, Cherry Plums & Cherries)

Minarettes are supplied already pruned; further pruning in the case of Minarette stone fruits will not be required before the late spring. With proper management a Minarette will continue to grow as a single column to about 1.8-2.4m (6-8ft) high with short fruit bearing spurs up and down its length. A certain amount of trimming and pruning to make sure it keeps to the desired size and shape will be necessary during the summer as well as a minimum amount of pruning in late spring. This will help to ensure that the tree bears well-coloured, good sized, ripe fruit every year. With Minarettes practically all the pruning is carried out in the summer with the purpose of retarding their growth and encouraging the formation of fruit buds.

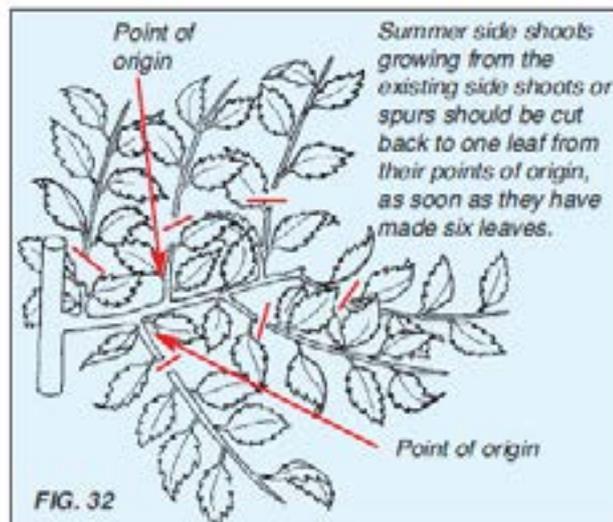
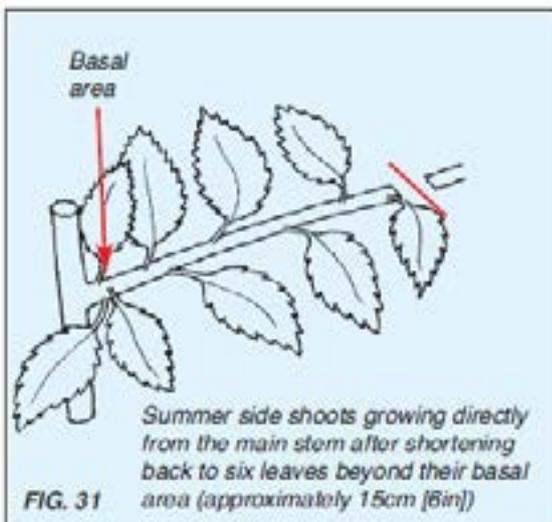
PRUNING THE MAIN STEM LEADER

The term 'main stem leader' refers to the new growth which leads a Minarette upwards at the top of the tree (see fig. 16). The main stem leaders of stone fruits grow very rapidly and must therefore have their respective growing points pinched out **when they have reached a length of 30cm (12in)**. A new leader will grow from the point where the initial leader was pinched out and this in turn should have its growing point similarly pinched out **as soon as it also has attained a length of 30cm (12in)**. This pinching out of the leader is repeated until the late summer but is not pruned back to 30cm (12in) **until May of the following year**.

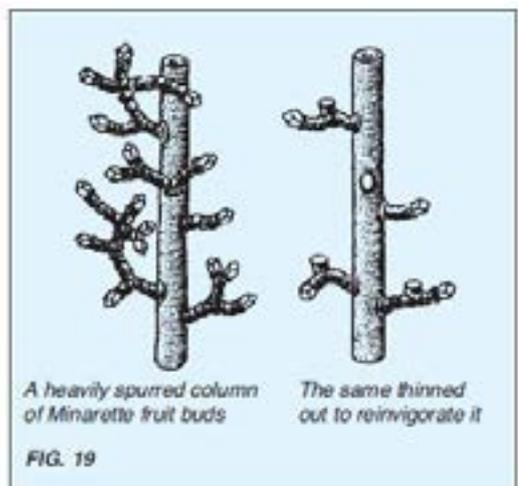
The reason for the delay in pruning the final leader is to help avoid the risk of silver leaf or bacterial canker gaining entry to the tree through a pruning cut made in the autumn or winter. The risk is minimal when pruning of stone fruits is delayed until the late spring or summer. Once a Minarette has reached its desired height the leader should be pruned in the same way as if it were a side shoot.

PRUNING THE SIDE SHOOTS

In the case of stone fruits, all current season's shoots emanating directly from the main stem should have their growing points pinched out once they have made six leaves beyond their basal clusters; this is likely to be some time during May (see fig. 31).



Secondary growth will appear and as soon as they have made six leaves they too should be pinched or cut back but this time to one leaf from their respective points of origin (see fig. 32). Any further secondary growth should be dealt with similarly. Any secondary growth occurring in the late summer should be shortened to one leaf the following spring, otherwise spring pruning (March-April) should only ever be carried out to stone fruits if a tree is making too much secondary growth or to renovate a neglected tree.



THINNING THE FRUIT SPURS

As the tree gets older it may be necessary to thin out the number of fruiting spurs if there are too many (See fig 19). Unlike apples, they should be thinned out during the late spring. Reducing the number of fruit buds increases the size of fruit but it must not be overdone.