

The Ridge to Reef Watershed Project (R2RW) is a five year (with an optional sixth year) activity contributing to the achievement of USAID/Jamaica's SO2 – "improved quality of key natural resources in areas that are both environmentally and economically significant". R2RW comprises three Components contributing to the achievement of the results under SO2. Component 1 assists targeted organizations identify and promote sustainable environmental management practices by resource users. Component 2 focuses on identifying and supporting solutions to improve the enforcement of targeted existing environmental regulations, primarily in the Great River and Rio Grande watersheds. Component 3 provides assistance to key organizations to support, coordinate, and expand watershed management efforts in Jamaica. For more information about R2RW, please contact one of the following organizations:



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Management of the Size and Shape of Fruit Trees in Home-Gardens



It is a common practice among Jamaican householders to grow fruit trees in their home gardens. Most times however, they allow the trees to grow to uncontrollably great heights. These trees soon become unmanageable and pose several problems. The excess fallen leaves and branches, add to the solid waste disposal management of a city or town. Large spreading branches cause unnecessary shading and dampness, to encourage some plant and human diseases and pests. Old or damaged trees often fall over without warning. In a windstorm falling trees and flying branches cause severe damage to buildings, cars, utility supplies etc., or block roads and drains, and both the insured and uninsured suffer. Although fruit trees are valuable, the fruits from many tall trees are not easily or ever reaped, because they are out of easy reach.



Many householders lack the knowledge of how to manage trees, and some even have the misconception that pruning will kill them. Others may not notice the rate of growth of the trees in their holdings. Except for timber and palms most other plants should be pruned regularly to maintain a desired size and shape. A well managed fruit tree can offer shade and windbreak, aesthetic beauty as well as healthy fruits, and the leaves form mulch and organic matter to benefit other plants.

In managing a tree, one should first decide on a shape and size. This is influenced by its species, its location in relation to other plants in the vicinity, buildings and utility supplies, and to other structures nearby. Some plants do not grow to a large size and are therefore easy to manage. Example of these are fig, guava, garden cherry, carambola, lime, pomegranate, sour sop and sweet sop. Others like ackee, apple, avocado, breadfruit, guinep, jackfruit and mango can become large. Most fruit trees produce fruits on new flushes, and regular pruning facilitates new growth. Fruit



trees can be grown near fences if this is agreeable to the neighbor - and there is a willingness to share the produce. Otherwise this could be a nuisance especially from fallen leaves and shading, also from the risk of toppling over. A fruit tree can be allowed to grow over a low building, but over shading and fallen leaves can be a problem if not properly

taken care of. Expanding tree roots often damage pipelines, paved areas or even buildings. Several fruit tree species can be grown on a small area of land if they are properly laid out and each is allowed adequate space to spread. If planted too closely, they will soon become clustered, necessitating the need for drastic pruning or even removal of some. This becomes a hard decision for many, and at this time the cost of workmanship and for pruning and transporting the cuttings can be very expensive.



Before attempting to prune, one should view each plant from several angles, and all the plants together in the garden, to decide on the size and shape that will make them fit, and which plants to eliminate. Each plant should have a single straight trunk, with the lower branches at a height that will not touch the ground when laden with fruits. The under-space allows for sitting, placing plant pots etc., makes it easier to control weeds or sweep away debris, and reduces hiding places for thieves. The main branches should be evenly spaced and point outwards from the trunk. The secondary and tertiary branches should also be evenly spaced and point outwards and upwards. The more growing tips a plant has, the more it can produce. All dead and dying branches should be cut away cleanly at their attachment.

The shape of a plant can be varied from dome, square, conical, round, oval, so long as it allows maximum exposure of the foliage to light. At each pruning the height, shape and size should be maintained.

There may come a time when a tree becomes old, sick or damaged. A young plant of the same or even another species can replace it. If the lower portion of the trunk is healthy, stumping can rejuvenate the plant. This involves cutting the trunk cleanly a few feet above the ground, and allowing it to sprout. One of two of the sprouts may be selected and allowed to grow and be trained to develop a desired shape and size plant.

