



The Frantoio Press

December 2009

Fruit Set

Flowering in the warmer areas is finished and the initial fruit set looks promising.



Olives in flower

At this stage the stone is being formed and will start to grow and later harden. After about 2 months the fruit will gain size more rapidly as the fruit flesh is developing. Timing of these events in cooler areas will be a month or so later.

The rain we got in the first week of December was very welcome as soils were getting a bit dry. The dry weather was good for pollination, the rain will help to get fruit growth on the way.

Summer Work

The last foliar Boron application should be applied no later than about 4 weeks after fruit set. Thereafter the effect will be greatly reduced or minimal.

Boron promotes flower viability, strengthens early cell division and prevents “monkey face”, a nutritional deficiency showing up as misshapen fruit.

Copper sprays will have been applied earlier. Copper can be phototoxic for flower buds, flowers and emerging fruit. If you

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need to apply copper it is better to delay until about 4 weeks after fruit set.

Your soil test (if you collected one) will indicate the nutrients status of your soil. If fertilizers are needed you should apply these before fruit flesh development to gain benefit of it.

I applied 1 ton Agrissential's Rok Solid per ha as a spring dressing. This is a Biogro certified fertilizer.

After fruit set when the crop load can be assessed a leaf sample is taken for analysis to determine whether the tree is lacking any nutrients. Any deficit is topped up before fruit flesh development to maximize tonnage at harvest time.

Following the last foliar boron application usually only one copper spray is required prior to harvest. Apply not later than mid-February to protect the summer flush against peacock spot and avoid residues on fruit at harvest time.

Peacock spot tends to creep up from the bottom of the tree where drying is slower and spores get onto the leaves from rain splash. Ensure good coverage of the bottom half of the tree; the tops dry out quicker and don't get the splash and thus are less vulnerable.

Organic Conversion

My grove is now in its last year of conversion.

I have to be more selective on nutrient applications and sprays.

The weed strips are not sprayed anymore. Every other time I mow across the blocks as well as through the rows and I mulch all cut branches (except for the heavy stuff). Next year I will put the pruned off wood through a chipper and blow the chips directly under the trees to get some weed control benefits.

Not having bare earth under the trees reduces rain splash that throws up Peacock spot spores and during harvest the nets do not get as dirty as they lay on grass rather than dirt that can be wet from morning dew.

Girdling

If you have tried some girdling it is now a good time to compare these trees with the others. In my grove the difference is undeniable!

Based on previous experience the girdled trees will have a heavy crop in 2010 but a lot less the next year. Having learned the effect of girdling I only girdle half the number of trees I want to do. Next year I do the other half.

Winter pruning will also be different as a consequence. Girdled trees do not require the same amount of summer pruning either.

Marketing

Marketing our oils (olive and avocado) is mainly via the farmers markets in the area. From here invitations come in to attend other special events.

A number of shops carry my oils and some restaurants are now also using it.

I am waiting for the later planted blocks to come into production so I can accelerate my marketing efforts without the risk of running out of oil early.



That ensures that I will have to re-launch every year and try to get my customers back. They may have otherwise secure alternative supplies elsewhere and it will be hard to make them change back again.

*Merry Christmas
and a Fruitful and Prosperous
2010*



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