Heritage Orchard Rehabilitation & Maintenance -Volunteer Training

****CHECK THIS PAGE FOR UPDATES****
Last Updated 3/5/26

When: March 2-6th, 2026 9:00am-3:30pm

Where: The course will be held at Cyrus and McCoin historic orchards north of Smith Rocks on the Crooked River National Grassland.

CHANGE OF PLANS!!
Friday, March 6th at 9 am. We're heading to McCoin!

If you'd like to carpool or follow us in, meet at the Skull Hollow Campground parking lot at **8:15 a.m.** We'll be taking the most reliable route

How do I get there?

Access to the orchards is via unpaved roads and may require a high-clearance vehicle. Conditions are often muddy and rutted, particularly during winter and spring thaw. The directions provided follow a reliable route; alternative roads may be closed or impassable, especially in winter or during mud season.

If you would like to carpool or caravan, please meet at SKULL HOLLOW CAMPGROUND parking lot at 815 am each morning. If you can accommodate an extra passenger, please meet at the Skull Hollow Campground parking lot at 815.

Driving Directions:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OvIkvzyBKaDO0GB7ECoc4Qacpa0H9d6eel0qVejEwqo/edit?usp=sharing



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What to Expect:

Participants should have prior experience using pruning tools. Coursework can be completed either from the ground or on a ladder, and extension poles may be used as an alternative to ladder work. The physical demands are moderate; the orchard floor may be flat, slightly sloped, or contain irregularities such as rodent holes, stobs, or fallen trees. Activities, which will be completed in small groups, include pruning limbs with hand pruners, hand saws, and pruning poles, as well as carrying branches to the perimeter using a tarp. All motorized chainsaw or pole-saw work will be performed only by certified operators, ensuring safety for all participants.

What should I bring?

Bring hydration and sunscreen, and lunch
Bring tools , if you have them, and extras to share:
Helmet/Hard hats (mandatory for all. We can provide)
Orchard Ladder
Loppers
Hand Pruners
Hand Saw (ie Silkie hand saw)
Pruning Pole (ie pruning pole saw)
Chainsaws (certified operators only)

How should I dress?

Dress appropriately for seasonal weather conditions, and standing around. Work gloves, closed-toed shoes, eye protection, helmet (we have extras), something to take notes with, and a chair.

Will food be provided?

Please bring your lunch, snacks, and hydration. We will plan a group potluck event towards the end of the week .

Workshop Description

The goal of this workshop is to build the local knowledge needed to care for our heritage orchards. We're creating The Heritage Apple Corps—a team of arborists, Forest Service staff, community members, and proud apple nerds dedicated to restoring these heirloom orchards.

Future Commitment: Participants will be asked to volunteer for upcoming restoration days—pruning big old trees, shaping the future of these orchards, and joining a spirited crew that's keeping history alive one branch at a time.

Arborists Continuing Education Credits Available! -this course has been approved for 30 Continuing Education Credits by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)

Course Description:

Participants will leave the course with a well-rounded understanding of how to manage historic orchards in a way that balances preservation, sustainability, and productivity. They will also gain a deeper appreciation for the historical and cultural importance of heirloom orchards, alongside the technical skills required to care for them.

This course on historic orchard management is an opportunity to delve into rehabilitating or managing historic fruit orchards. The course will use the foundation of tree biology to walk through technical practices like pruning, watering, pest control, and tree health to address challenges unique to historic orchard environments.

Participants should expect training sessions followed by hands-on work sessions with group and individualized opportunities for experiential learning.

The workshop includes an introduction to tree health assessments, hands-on evaluation exercises, equipment safety, and pruning theory and techniques. Participants will engage in guided demonstrations and group-based pruning practice, while exploring topics such as the history and philosophy of heritage orchards, pest management, propagation, and water needs. This structure blends practical, on-tree skills with essential knowledge for long-term stewardship and restoration of historic orchards.

WORKSHOP LEADERS



Amanda Snodgrass

Amanda Snodgrass holds a B.S. and M.S. in Horticulture from Iowa State University. She managed historic orchards at Capitol Reef National Park for several years, providing maintenance, renovation, and educational programs for staff and the public. A retired U.S. Forest Service botanist, Amanda continues to restore historic and neglected orchards in the Northwest through her professional practice and has assisted National Park and Forest Service units across multiple states in preserving heritage fruit trees.



Karen Tillou

Karen Tillou, an ISA Certified Arborist since 2016, is currently a co-owner of a residential tree care company, Prunus, and has been pruning residential fruit trees of all shapes and sizes in the Pacific Northwest since 2003. She has taught fruit tree pruning at Clackamas Community College and through the Home Orchard Society, a non-profit dedicated to home fruit growing, and helps in eastern Oregon renovating and maintaining pioneer apple orchards

WORKSHOP PARTNERS



US Forest Service

Heritage Apple Corps is working with the U.S. Forest Service to restore and maintain these historic orchards, preserving their unique legacy for the community and future generations. The McCoin and Cyrus historic orchards are located on the Crooked River National Grassland within the Ochoco National Forest.

Agenda & Learning Objectives

March 2-6th, 2026 9:00am-3:30pm

Day 1 (Cyrus Historic Orchard)

- Heritage Apple Corps Introductions
- Circle round-up
- Workshop goals and overview
  Basic introduction to pruning theory, tree assessment, tool usage and pruner confidence. The goal to continue the restoration trajectory of the historic orchards in the Cyrus and McCoin but also to give knowledge to take home and apply to your own orchards
- Safety
- Orchard Goals and Pruning Goals

LUNCH

- Introduction to Biology and Biomechanics
- Tree Health Assessments: Basic assessment of live/dead (will go into more depth in McCoin)
- Pruning Techniques and Theory: Basic deadwood removal - teams. Proper cutting technique (reduction or removal cuts, deadwood ID, reduce damage to livewood (phased cuts)).
- Deadwood Removal/Hands on practice

Day 2 (Cyrus Historic Orchard)

- Set orchard pruning goals for the day
- Tailgate Safety
- Ongoing discussion of applicable biology, structural integrity, pruning technique during hands on pruning.
- Deadwood Removal

LUNCH

- Deadwood Removal
- PM Breakout: Remaining tree/live wood assessment; Successive year management planning.

Day 3 (McCoin Historic Orchard)

- Set orchard pruning goals for the day
- Safety
- Biology and Biomechanics: Pruning response and growth habits (including annual growth), components of structural integrity (branch angles, weight, branch spacing, leaders/co-dominance)
- Tree Health Assessments: Advance assessment to include growth habits and components of structural integrity.

- Pruning Practice and Work Day

LUNCH

- Pruning Practice and Work Day
- PM Breakout Session: Aesthetics, Balance, and Human vs. Tree Beauty

Day 4 (McCoin Historic Orchard)

- Pruning Practice and Work Day - tree-focused discussions and problem solving
- Tailgate Safety

  LUNCH

- PM Breakout Sessions:
  New orchard management/rootstock selection
  Pests/Disease/Expectations/IPM
  Grafting workshop – topworking and grafting techniques for old trees

Day 5 (**McCoin Historic Orchard**)

- Pruning Practice and Work Day - tree-focused discussions and problem solving
- Tailgate Safety
- Breakouts: Individual concerns/questions

Learning Objectives:

- ☐ Participants will learn how to conduct a comprehensive health assessment of old heirloom apple trees, including visual inspection for signs of disease and pest damage, evaluation of structural integrity, soil and root condition, etc.
- ☐ Participants will understand the role of pruning in fruit tree health and apply pruning techniques through hands-on practice, focusing on structure maintenance, disease removal, and air circulation, with opportunities for demonstration and feedback.
- ☐ Participants will learn restorative pruning techniques, including heading, thinning, and shortening cuts, and how to identify fruiting versus vegetative buds to rejuvenate trees, promote growth, and encourage fruit production with minimal stress.
- ☐ Participants will learn safety protocols for using pruning equipment and orchard ladders, including proper protective gear, tool handling, hazard recognition, and ladder stability, while acknowledging course risks through liability waivers.

For any questions about this workshop, please contact heritageapplecorps@schoolofranch.org