Orchard Tech
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Pruning and removal of prunings on an almond farm

What to expect before you start

Version 1.1 | Date of review: 18 October 2026 | Date of next review: 18 October 2028

This sheet describes typical pruning and removal of prunings work and conditions. Your actual duties depend on the farm and what you are trained and authorised to do. Reading this sheet does not authorise you to use a chainsaw or other power tool, work at height, drive a farm vehicle or operate machinery.

Who you work for

Orchard Tech is your employer. Your host farm (your host) directs your daily work. Both are responsible for your health and safety. Raise questions or safety concerns with your supervisor or Orchard Tech: Hari Yellina, 0439 32 32 32, or Soana Fanua, 0400 174 471.

Your working hours

Your confirmed roster sets your days, hours and breaks. Ask your supervisor if you are unsure.

The work you may do

Hand pruning. Pruning means cutting branches off the trees. It may be done in winter or summer. Your host decides which branches to cut and will show you how. Use only the hand tools your host provides, in the way you were shown. If you are not sure whether to cut a branch, ask your supervisor.

Removing prunings. Prunings are the branches cut off the trees. Move them by hand and put them where your supervisor tells you. Ask for help with branches that are too heavy or awkward to move alone.

Machine pruning and machine removal. On some farms, machines are used for pruning or for removing prunings. Operating these machines is a separate task. Do it only if it is part of your confirmed job and your host has trained, assessed and authorised you for that machine. A licence alone does not show you can operate it safely.

This sheet covers hand pruning and hand removal of prunings only. Using a chainsaw, pole saw or other power tool, working at height, driving and operating machinery are separate tasks. They need their own instructions, training and authorisation.

Pruning by hand safely

- **Sharp tools:** pruning tools are sharp. Keep your hands away from the cutting edges. Check your tools before you use them. Do not use a damaged tool: report it to your supervisor. Carry and store tools as your host shows you.
- **Falling branches:** keep a safe space between you and other workers when you cut. Keep yourself and other workers out of the area where branches may fall. If you cannot cut a branch safely, leave it and tell your supervisor.
- **Eyes and face:** branches and twigs can hit your face and eyes. Wear the eye protection your host provides.

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- **Work from the ground.** Do not climb trees or stand on a ladder, platform or other object for this work. If you cannot reach a branch safely from the ground, leave it and tell your supervisor. Work at height is a separate task. It needs its own instructions, training and authorisation.
- **Power lines:** if a tree or branch is near a power line, do not prune it. Keep away and tell your supervisor.
- **Drip lines:** drip lines are the irrigation pipes that water the trees. Watch for them on the ground. If a drip line is cut, leaking or disconnected, or you damage one, report it to your supervisor and say where it is (block and row). Repairs are a separate task, not part of this work.

Working near machines

Tractors, machines used for pruning or for removing prunings, and other vehicles may be working in or near your block.

- **Keep separate from machines.** Before you start, ask your host to show you where to work and how workers are kept away from machinery. If a machine comes into your work area, stop work, keep clear and tell your supervisor.
- **Never approach a working machine** until the operator has stopped and clearly signalled you to come closer. Eye contact alone is not enough.
- **Moving parts:** keep your hands, clothing and body away from the moving parts of any machine, such as spinning shafts and cutting parts.
- **Be seen:** wear the high-visibility clothing your host provides, and watch for vehicles coming out of rows and turning at the headlands (the turning areas at the ends of the rows).

Weather and the outdoors

Most work is outdoors in heat, cold, wind, rain and dust. Watch for holes, pipes, slippery ground and snakes. Work may change or stop in heat, storms or smoke: follow your host's instructions. Use sun protection all year (broad-brim hat, long sleeves, sunglasses, sunscreen), drink water often, take shade breaks and dress for the weather. Tell your supervisor straight away if you or a co-worker feel sick, dizzy or very hot.

- **Do not enter a block that is being sprayed or has a no-entry sign. Do not drink irrigation water:** it may contain fertiliser or chemicals.

Movement and lifting

Expect long walks on uneven ground, a lot of bending and reaching, repeated gripping and cutting, and repeated lifting and carrying. Branches can be heavy, sharp or hard to carry. Dust and twigs can get in your eyes. Wear the gloves and eye protection your host provides. If a lift feels unsafe, ask for help or use the equipment provided. Report pain or discomfort early.

- **Dust:** follow your host's instructions for dust. If dust makes it hard to breathe or to see clearly, stop work, move to a safe place and tell your supervisor.

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Moving around the farm safely

Mule or similar farm vehicle

Some farms use a side-by-side vehicle, such as a Kawasaki MULE, to carry workers and materials.

- **Driving is not covered by this sheet.** If driving is part of your confirmed job, get the safe work instructions, training and authorisation for that vehicle first. A licence alone does not show you can drive it safely.
- **Driver and passengers:** wear your seat belt every time, and the helmet and eye protection your host provides (your host will tell you what to wear). Keep doors or nets closed and arms and legs inside. Sit only in a seat with a seat belt. Never ride in the tray or bypass a safety device.

Farm traffic rules

- **Follow the farm traffic plan:** use set routes, obey signs and speed limits, and keep away from steep slopes, banks and water.
- **On foot:** use walking routes and keep clear of moving machinery. Stop in a safe place before using a phone.

PPE and help on the farm

Your host will provide the personal protective equipment (PPE) for your tasks and show you how to wear, check and look after it. This may include safety boots, high-visibility clothing, gloves, eye or hearing protection, sun protection and a vehicle helmet. Report missing, damaged or poorly fitting PPE before you start. PPE does not replace training, instructions or other safety controls.

At induction, learn who your supervisor is, where water, toilets and first aid are, the emergency plan, how to get help where there is no phone coverage, and the check-in arrangements when you work alone.

- In a life-threatening emergency, call Triple Zero (000), then tell your supervisor. If you see a snake, keep clear and never try to catch or kill it. If a snake bites you, or you think you have been bitten, keep as still as possible and call 000 or ask someone to call.
- Report every injury, near miss or unsafe situation to your supervisor and Orchard Tech as soon as possible, even if it seems small.
- Ask for a demonstration, an explanation or language help whenever you do not understand.

Important note before starting any job

This sheet describes typical pruning and removal of prunings work. Before you start, your host will give you the job description and safe work instructions for your actual duties, the PPE you need, a farm induction and training for your tasks. Follow those instructions. Do not do any work without the required PPE, training and authorisation. Complete the induction at every new farm, and get the instructions and training for every new task. **If anything is missing, unsafe or unclear, stop and ask your supervisor. You can also contact Orchard Tech.**