While there was still snow on the ground I embarked on the journey of learning about the preparation phase of Tree Fruit Work. I stepped onto the cold ground with an open mind and a pair of loppers in my hand and set out to pursue the task of getting ready for harvest. It could be said that a farmers entire job is getting ready for harvest, but in the case of tree fruit, this was something new for me. I would learn different types of pruning, cleaning and management that are offered in the world of orchards.

Responsibilities

- Pruning
  - Overseeing the removal of vegetative branches and stems, while clearing the canopy for light and heat.
  - Ensuring that any diseased plant stem or section is removed to prevent contamination to the rest of the tree.
  - Removing any limbs or branches that would endanger the operator of the tractors that travel between and down the rows.

- Safety
  - Ensuring a solid base for the use of any ladders that are being used.
  - Having another person present while on the property when any employee was above 2ft off of the ground.
  - Checking to make sure that the motorized equipment was in good working order and all of the safety features where installed and up to date.
  - Clearing the rows of cut pieces of wood and ensure their removal from the orchard to not damage equipment.

Learning Objectives

- Having a clear and defined understanding of all of the tasks that were laid out for the day.
- Asking the necessary questions of either Deb or Chris when the need arose.
- Learning and understanding the type of pruning that had to be done on the certain blocks of trees that where present.

Mechanical Knowledge

- Know where to find the main water on and off valves and understanding where the soil and the waters meet.
- Knowing how to calibrate the sprayers and understand their inner workings.
- Training the vines on the supports and ensuring their prolonged health and vitality

Daily Objectives

- To have fun and learn something new!

Summary of Lessons Learned

It has been a privilege to work at the Tukey orchard and to learn the new techniques that are being taught in the world of tree fruit today. Being that Tukey orchard is a learning orchard it was also encouraged to try new things, even if we made mistakes. Having an environment where I got to do that was something that I do believe would have been lacking in other places and when doing other things.

Since I would like to attend trade school after getting my degree, it has been fun and entertaining to learn about what equipment is the best to buy for a variety of reasons. From what equipment has the best warranty to what parts break or how the best way to set something up is. Knowing this gives me a better idea of what to look for and to remember for the future and the workarounds I can use.

I also really want to have my own land someday. I want to grow food on it, and with what I learned with grafting and the new kinds of tree fruit that is out there now with cosmic crisp. After working this I found that this is much easier on my body than some of the other harvesting techniques in other farms and in other areas.

I also want to take what I have learned and apply it to the organic world. I am pursing my organic certificate and having the knowledge about how to transplant and when to spray is going to be invaluable when I am going to be in the workforce in the future. I look forward to applying what I have learned in the world of conventional farming and apply it to the world of organic farming.

I look forward now to the summer when I will get a chance to use the base knowledge that I learned this spring and apply them to the busy season of maintenance and picking.