

WSU Tukey Orchard Pullman, WA Henry Cawood Spring Semester 2020

Introduction

The WSU Tukey Orchard, managed by Deb Pehrson is a place for students and researchers at Pullman to conduct teaching and extension work. This site grows multiple apple varieties, including apples bred for cider production. Currently, there are two orchard locations, the new site is located at WSU Spillman Farm, and will have been planted late this spring. The old site, located at Tukey Orchard is where I conducted all of my work this year. Tukey Orchard has undergone a large change, and almost half of it has been pulled out to make room for the airport runway, but the other half is still in production for the next three to five years before the Spillman location comes into production.

Job Description

My work started at Tukey Orchard with training overseen by Deb Pehrson. I watched training videos on ladder safety and other various horticultural topics. I read multiple articles on tree pruning techniques and began working with others to prune large classically grown trees, as well as smaller trees grown in a higher density on a vertical trellis system. There were a variety of cultivars to work on that had differing amounts of vigorous growth, and therefore required different amounts of pruning.

Our plan this year was to also learn about the WSU decision aid system, to see models of pest lifecycles and the growing degree days they require. This data is used to help make management decisions in the orchard with things like when to use a certain kind of spray.



Pictured Above are open centered trees grown at Tukey Orchard. Each branch was to be pruned, cutting away pieces that were old or overshadowing other limbs to allow for new growth to form and to let sunlight into the canopy.

Summary

My internship at Tukey Orchard was cut short due to Covid-19 concerns, but the time I spent there was very meaningful. My experience at Tukey taught me the real-world application of the sciences I had learned in class. This experience has helped prepare me for the professional world of agriculture by giving me firsthand experience with some of the most impactful orchard management decisions.