
AGRICULTURAL SAFETY TOPICS

ORCHARD LADDER SAFETY

Objective:

To be able to properly use orchard ladders.

Background:

Before workers begin working on ladders they should be properly trained. Orchard harvesting teams should include an experienced person to simplify and expedite ladder moving. Moving ladders in the orchard can cause extra work and may lead to additional accidents.

The improper moving and lifting of tripod orchard ladders may lead to many accidents including falls. Tripod orchard ladders are designed to be used on soft and uneven terrain therefore they lack spreaders, locking devices, steel points, and safety shoes. This ladder is not a general purpose ladder and should only be used in an orchard for pruning and harvesting operations. The ladder could collapse when used on firm, smooth ground. The top of the ladder can be made of a combination of wood or metal. Only one person should be on the ladder at a time.

Tripod Orchard Ladder Features:

- Single back leg provides relatively stable support on uneven terrain.
- Steps are at least 69 cm (27 inches) long and should have a metal angle brace.
- Maximum flare on the top to bottom rails 18.7cm/m (averaging 2.25 inches per foot) is required to stabilize the base.
- A double base on the rails is provided to control excessive penetration in soft soil.

The back of an orchard ladder should be towards the tree center, allowing for additional support if the worker slips. An orchard extension ladder should only have one person on the ladder at a time. The top of the ladder is not to be used as a step.

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Orchard Extension Ladder Features:

- Converging rails at the top for easy fit in the limb crotch.
- Virtual one-point top bearing increases stability.
- Optional equipment which can be used on orchard extension ladders includes:
 - Steel “spikes” to prevent base slipping/skidding.
 - Rubber sleeves on upper rail sector to reduce branch abrasion and possibility of slip along the limb.

Review the Following Points:

- Tripod orchard ladders are a source of many accidents.
- The top of the ladder is prohibited as a step.
- It is recommended that the back of an orchard ladder should be aimed toward the tree center.
- Everyone using a ladder should have proper training before work begins, especially in orchards.

Based upon: Ohio State University Extension. *Orchard Ladder*. Retrieved from website <http://ohioline.osu.edu/atts/modules.html>

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