

Orchard ladder safety

Inspect a ladder like a pro

Ladder inspections should be performed by a competent person who can identify workplace hazards and has the authority and resources to fix them. Here's what to look for:

- Ensure bottom feet are unbroken so they will be stable on the ground.
- Inspect all rungs, rails. Nothing should be cracked, bent, missing, loose, or rusted.
- Secure all bolts and rivets.
- Check for foreign material on ladder, like oil or grease.
- All labels should be in place and readable.
- Tag ladders "out of service" until repaired or discarded.

Inspect ladders each day before use; do a thorough inspection at least once a year. Clearly mark any ladders that have been rejected.

Position ladders so the angle isn't too steep or flat. Use the tripod pole; leaning a ladder against a tree increases the risk of falling.

Set the ladder firmly in the ground, avoiding soft spots or holes. Never use an orchard ladder on a hard surface.

Wear non-slip shoes; avoid loose clothing that could cause tripping.

Climb carefully, maintaining three points of contact.

Center your belt buckle area between the side rails. Move the ladder as needed to avoid leaning out.

Don't stand on the top cap or top step. Leave fruit that is too high to pick. Hold down limbs to ladder height for pruning.

Never step out on branches or climb in the tree.

Avoid working over people, equipment, or other objects that would increase injury during a fall.

Climb down off the ladder if a tractor approaches.

For more tips on using tripod orchard ladders safely, check out this OSHA fact sheet: [osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3728.pdf](https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3728.pdf)

