



Ground Cloths for Harvesting

Posted by [Brittany Kordick](#)[Forum List](#) [Message List](#) [New Topic](#)[Brittany Kordick](#)[Ground Cloths for Harvesting](#)

June 22, 2022 08:21PM

Registered: 4 years ago

Posts: 209

We have a few varieties of apples that are tricky to keep track of harvest-wise since they ripen gradually and tend to just drop over a course of weeks. Rather than our usual try and keep up with them and keep the grass mowed at the right time and for the duration under the canopies, for next year we're interested in putting out harvest cloths or netting to catch them as they drop for more efficient pickup and better sanitation. My grandfather had an olive orchard, so I'm familiar with the harvest netting that olive growers lay out at harvest time to catch the olives and gather them up for easier collection. Definitely would want something similar, that allows water to pass through in the event of rain, won't tear when you step on it. I was wondering if any of you cidemakers are doing anything like this currently and can recommend a particular product or type of product. I know people have at least mentioned being interested in European style tree-shaking cider apple harvest wherein you cause all the apples to fall down and pick them up.

One difference with what we're looking for is that we'd like to put a material down that stays down for a couple or few weeks for these gradual harvest trees, rather than a material that's put down for a one-time harvest and picked right back up again. Haven't figured out how we'd handle any spray needs or other tractor-driven tasks since our trees grow together and much or most of the aisle would have to be covered and potentially driven over, as well. We're also wanting to do blocks of trees all at once, so probably looking for larger footprints than per tree dimensions of 12' by 12' or some such (although, if it was cost effective to do it per tree, not opposed to it). I know there's lots of stuff to think about repurposing, such as hail netting, but I'm kind of surprised that I haven't seen anything in orchard supply depots like Oesco specifically like I'm hoping to find. A bonus would be if the material somehow mitigated bruising, but I think that's wishful thinking unless they made this genius Fruit Collector product on a much larger scale and at a lower price (but this sure would be great for homeowners or very small orchards): [www.greenhousemegastore.com].

[Kordick Family Farm](#)

Westfield, NC

Zone 7a

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 06/22/2022 08:23PM by Brittany Kordick.

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)[Brittany Kordick](#)[Re: Ground Cloths for Harvesting](#)

August 31, 2022 11:40PM

Registered: 4 years ago

Posts: 209

FYI, we ended up purchasing SmartNet insect/bird/hail netting from Oesco upon an Oesco rep's recommendation. He didn't have experience using it for the purpose of fruit collection, but has used it for years as bird protection on his blueberry bushes, and is a big fan of it for maneuverability and washability. We concur. As a trial, we purchased 2 rolls of hail netting that are 7 feet wide and 100 feet long and unrolled 1 roll down each side of a row of trees. The width is perfect under our MM111 trees; opposing sides almost meet in the middle of our aisles and very little ground is not covered. This stuff is very easy to work with. I rolled it out in a rainstorm by myself with no difficulty. It's heavy enough that it doesn't skitter around as you pull it, but light enough that it's no trouble to pull out (one roll weighs 12 lbs). Fruit is currently falling on it, and so, weighing it down somewhat, but I don't think we'll have any issues with wind blowing it around, even without any kind of weights or anchors. The material is impervious to water, so doesn't soak any up. It will be very easy to wash off with a hose, but the material doesn't seem like much dirt/debris will adhere to it (I was concerned that we wouldn't be able to wash it better than with a hose -- no longer). We are fortunate to have a very long wooden fence to dry it on after washing, but a day on the ground in the sun probably would do just fine for anyone without a way to get it up so the air hits it. You can definitely walk on the stuff to get fruit, but I don't like the idea of getting it dirty with my shoes. It will be very easy to gather the material just like you would an olive crop, on the ground, and get it all into a tighter line or pile, but of course, then you'll have to set it up again if you wish to keep it out for long periods. Alternately, you can certainly cut the material into pieces and slit to use around individual trees, as you would probably want to do if you opted for the wider option of 17 feet. We're happy with the 7 foot width, and at \$66 (plus shipping) per 100 foot roll, it doesn't break the bank. We're imagining getting several more rolls so that we can have it under a couple varietal blocks at one time. The perforations aren't big enough that I worry about groundcover growing up through it if it's on the ground a long time in one place, and it allows sunlight penetration, so no concern about it killing groundcover. Good stuff, think it will work well for our purposes. I don't think driving on it with a tractor would particularly damage it, but instinctively, don't like the idea of doing that.

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Westfield, NC

Zone 7a

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)[Josh Willis](#)[Re: Ground Cloths for Harvesting](#)

January 04, 2023 09:48PM

Registered: 6 years ago

Posts: 133

Thanks for posting about this, Brittany. We have wondered about something like this for a few years.

Are the size of the holes in the netting such that a snake might get caught? Our local black snakes have shown a great ability for getting stuck and choked in bird netting, such that we had to stop using it years ago.

Earthworks

Zone 7a in West-Central MD

Non-commercial, ~100 fruit trees, dwarf to MM106

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[Brittany Kordick](#)

[Re: Ground Cloths for Harvesting](#)

January 05, 2023 03:42PM

Registered: 4 years ago

Posts: 209

Thanks for your concern, Josh -- we also have had snake issues with things like rolled up Hortonova trellis, so are sensitive to things like this. The mesh in OESCO's hail netting is very tightly woven and wouldn't pose any issues for snakes getting caught; not even close to spacing size that would be an issue (ours is all packed up for the season, but off the top of my head, I'm remembering the weave spacing as sort of 1/8 inch triangles, max; OESCO doesn't list any dimensions for the weave, but could probably tell you). The only consideration I would make is what sort of orchard floor you have. When you're putting out the netting, you will probably need to pull it along the ground to some extent to situate it right where you want it. If you're doing this on an orchard floor that has a lot of woody growth that's been cut off (even rigid briars that have been mowed) or sticking up (residual roots from working up a new floor, for instance), you may find that you get some holes in your mesh from it catching on such things as you pull it, and these larger holes may be an issue at some point. If you've got a prohibitively gnarly orchard floor, though, it probably wouldn't be worth using the mesh since you would incur so much damage, though, and I wouldn't worry about a hole here or there in a hundred plus foot length of the mesh (snake's got to have a death wish to seek a hole out at that spacing!).

[Kordick Family Farm](#)

Westfield, NC

Zone 7a

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[Josh Willis](#)

[Re: Ground Cloths for Harvesting](#)

January 05, 2023 07:57PM

Registered: 6 years ago

Posts: 133

Thanks, Brittany, that is awesome to hear. We may look into getting this. If we can get our old apple trees producing enough to warrant it this year! ;)

Earthworks

Zone 7a in West-Central MD

Non-commercial, ~100 fruit trees, dwarf to MM106

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