



Power pruner options

Posted by [Peter Fisher](#)

[Forum List](#) [Message List](#) [New Topic](#)

[Peter Fisher](#)

[Power pruner options](#)

February 05, 2017 09:56PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 82

I would like to hear about experience with/ recommendations for battery-powered or pneumatic pruning shears. With recurring back trouble and arthritis in my hands, pruning is the one task that is physically a challenge, and not getting better with the years. But we have a small diversified orchard (apples, peaches, Eurocean and Asian pears, 145 trees) so the prices of the battery-powered ones are hard to justify -- \$1600 or more, or maybe \$600-\$800 for an import of unknown quality. The pneumatic ones seem more reasonable -- under \$300 for the shears alone -- until you figure in the cost of a portable compressor. I have a good sized electric compressor that could be parked at the top of the orchard to refill a portable air tank as needed, but am doubtful the portable tank will maintain enough pressure for long enough to be worth it. Any thoughts?

Turkey Creek Orchard

Solon, Iowa (zone 5A)

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Scott Overby](#)

[Re: Power pruner options](#)

February 08, 2017 01:24AM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 5

Peter,

A friend of mine tried the electric pruners and they were not powerful enough for >1" branches. Good for grapes but not apples. I doubt the handheld pneumatics would be powerful enough either. Again good for grapes, but not apples.

I picked up a couple of pneumatic Campagnola extendable pole pruners(retail price ~\$700[ouch] from Oescoinc.com) and have used them for over 5 years now. I power it with a gas powered compressor I found on Craigslist for about \$250. I picked up 100' of neon green air hose(keeps flexible in cold temps) from local Fleet Farm for a reasonable price.

Stored air will not work; pruners take a LOT of air to operate.

There are cold weather issues with air pruners. Moisture collects in the lines and pruner pistons will freeze. When air temps are <0 F., I do not use them due to freeze issues.

I see Harbor Freight has a gas powered compressor for ~\$550.

If you need more power, check out the Campagnola Star-50. It's has a fixed length pole, but has a larger piston located at the base of the pole. I have not used it, but my friend swears by it for larger cuts.

The pruners are expensive, but well worth it in speeding up pruning and saving my shoulders and arms.

Scott Overby

Log Cabin Orchard

Plymouth, WI

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Francis Brabant](#)

[Re: Power pruner options](#)

February 09, 2017 08:56PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 11

Hi!

Campagnola is pretty much the only game in town. Fixed length are less expensive and slightly lighter. Don't skimp on the compressor. Beside, it's always useful on a farm. Word of caution. You need 150 lbs to get the most out of the pruner. Most compressor run in the 90-120 range. You can change the controller but only if the compressor pump is rated for higher pressure.

I use mine in winter all the time (After all, it's call winter pruning...). Grab some gas antifreeze (buy a jug of methyl hydrate at the hardware store) and put some in a small bottle sprayer. Spray a bit in the air fitting of your pruner once or twice a day. Make sure to store the compressor inside overnight to be able to drain it in the morning. (I never do but do as I say, not as I do...)

lest I forget, for God's sake, stick with Honda engine.

Francis

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Karen Brindle](#)

[Re: Power pruner options](#)

February 14, 2017 10:40AM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 103

Hi, I bought a Zenport 1.5" electric pruner this winter, it is fantastic! The battery lasts for an amazingly long time. We have over 250 fruit trees, and a bunch of landscaping. I can use it for several hours each day, for several days in a row without having to re-charge. It is powerful, I've stupidly cut larger branches than its rated for, it keeps working. I also bought the pole extension but have not used it yet. I highly recommend the Zenport

[Vista Ridge Orchard](#)

Zone 8a in Washington

235 Cider and heritage apple trees, 72 varieties,

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Peter Fisher](#)

[Re: Power pruner options](#)

February 14, 2017 06:33PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 82

That must have been the SCA3. I see it online for around \$800. Can you tell me how quickly it makes a cut and returns to the open position?

Turkey Creek Orchard

Solon, Iowa (zone 5A)

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Karen Brindle](#)

[Re: Power pruner options](#)

February 19, 2017 04:39AM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 103

Hi Peter, actually I think I bought the SCA2 because the SCA3 does not come with the pole extender. Cuts are fast, as is return, blade has 2 positions, the wider open takes longer to open and close, but also is powerful quick at cutting larger branches! I'm sure I've cut bigger than it is rated, it does well. At the smaller opening, I do not notice that I'm waiting for the blade to open for the next cut. I am really amazed at how long the battery lasts!!!!

[Vista Ridge Orchard](#)

Zone 8a in Washington

235 Cider and heritage apple trees, 72 varieties,

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Noe Bunnell](#)

[Re: Power pruner options](#)

March 25, 2017 10:17AM

Registered: 6 years ago

Posts: 5

What about just using a battery powered sawzall our something?

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Fabio Chizzola](#)

[Re: Power pruner options](#)

March 25, 2017 01:27PM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 35

I already feel bad for the tree, thinking how much the sawzall will make the tree or the branch shake....I don't personally think it's a good idea.

[Westwind Orchard](#)

Zone 5b in New York

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Ethan Gouge](#)

[Re: Power pruner options](#)

March 28, 2017 03:10AM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 36

Tried the sawzaw this year for larger (2' +) diameter cuts standing up in trees where I didn't want to handle a chain saw. It worked fine, I can cut with a hand saw about as fast, but of course with much more effort. Shaking was an issue when cutting at an angle where the branch pinches the blade but not other-wise if cutting at the branch intersection. This should be an option if you've got mature trees and have the saw already. Power pruners are for high volume pruning so we're talking two different jobs here.

Roan Highlands Farm 6b, Roan Mountain, TN elevation: 3200 ft.

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[James Smith](#)

[Re: Power pruner options](#)

January 15, 2021 04:12AM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 57

Karen Brindle Wrote:

> Hi, I bought a Zenport 1.5" electric
> pruner this winter, it is fantastic! The battery
> lasts for an amazingly long time. We have over 250
> fruit trees, and a bunch of landscaping. I can use
> it for several hours each day, for several days in
> a row without having to re-charge. It is powerful,
> I've stupidly cut larger branches than its rated
> for, it keeps working. I also bought the pole
> extension but have not used it yet. I highly
> recommend the Zenport

Hello Karen, thanks for posting this as I hadn't heard of this pruner. It's been a few years now, how well has it held up and performed for you?

Washington Okanogan Valley
Zone 6b

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Karen Brindle](#)

[Re: Power pruner options](#)

January 15, 2021 08:41PM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 103

Hi James, I'm still using this pruner! I bought another (Felco) as a back up last year when the Zenport quit working. I sent it in for service, turned out to be the cord had failed. They replaced it at a very reasonable cost and it's been working like a champ ever since. I actually prefer the Felco: a bit lighter weight, slightly smaller more comfortable grip, a little quicker return, and battery pack sits differently in the backpack making it more comfortable. However, I must have cut a branch too big for it and it now won't give me a clean cut, especially on small twigs. I'm trying to find a repair service. Zenport service is in Oregon and they were outstanding to work with! For reliability I still have to recommend Zenport, mine is still going strong in its 4th season of pruning!

[Vista Ridge Orchard](#)

Zone 8a in Washington

235 Cider and heritage apple trees, 72 varieties,

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[James Smith](#)

[Re: Power pruner options](#)

January 16, 2021 04:55AM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 57

Hello Karen, I didn't know about the Felcos. They were my hand pruner of choice a lifetime ago when I was a landscaper in San Diego. How did the pole attachment work with your Zenport? There were a couple of Amazon reviews that weren't encouraging. How big of branch will the pruners cut? It says 1.5 inches, I can't imagine using a pruner on a larger branch, you are braver than I!

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Karen Brindle](#)

[Re: Power pruner options](#)

January 22, 2021 08:35PM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 103

James, I have not used the pole for our apple trees. But it did work extremely well when clearing our roads of overhanging forest tree branches so they would not scrape our RV. This job did not need a precise cut. Standing in the back of the truck got us additional reach and the pruners were excellent for this job. I cut branches as big as will fit into the open blades.

[Vista Ridge Orchard](#)

Zone 8a in Washington

235 Cider and heritage apple trees, 72 varieties,

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Don Kretschmann](#)

[Re: Power pruner options](#)

January 24, 2022 09:27PM

Registered: 1 year ago

Posts: 11

Thanks, Karen for your trialing and endorsement of the zenport. Researched them all, and there are several more out there now, but went with zenport for positive review and being around for a while. Pruner warehouse in Napa, CA is about the cheapest--\$950+- Would have gone with a Felco because I've always been impressed by their quality, but it's twice the price. Originally got the EP4 which is the largest model cutting 1.75". Thought if I liked it, I could get the extension to convert to a pole pruner. Plus, it's only a few bucks more. Mistake! the EP4 is incompatible with the extension. So I ordered the EP3 immediately plus the extension. It arrived in a scant 2 days. So I had both here to physically compare for a day or so. They are virtually the same weight, with the ep4 slightly larger and heavier cutter. Ever so slight difference in the outer case of the unit making the pole not fit. Sent the ep4 back for refund.

Just beginning to prune, but it's a revolution for a 70 year old! I started pruning our 25 yr old M7 trees with the Zenport and a silky saw for the occasional larger wood. The zenport is like having one tool which is both pruning shear and lopper. So it saves a lot of time swapping from one tool to the other. Pruning shear+lopper is 99% of the cutting.

Plusses I saw right away: 1. It makes short work of the forest of watersprouts in the upper canopy. These can be so overwhelming at times, that I've shied from pruning the upper reaches as thoroughly as ideal for fear of provoking that growth. 2. zenport can handle the stated 1.5" and it appears even more. You just need to cut, remove shear, then recut in same spot to complete. Really not that big a deal. But they caution you not to twist the tool, as it can bend the steel. Personally it appears to be pretty hefty and don't see how that could happen easily. 3. the speed with which you can cut seems to correspond well with my brain's ability to make all those complexity of choices before that thought disappears, if you know what I mean. It's like you can so quickly observe an overhanging overgrown scaffold and whack it back or eliminate, then quickly get on to the thinning and sprout removal before the next major decision. 5. It's so much fun to use this new toy, it makes this too-merciful pruner a lot more bold. 6. Can't wait to use this on our trellised block where some of the M26's typically have lots to growth at the top wire where it's very difficult at times to get the loppers positioned. I'd imagine no need for any other tool there. Again, seems it would be ideal to lop off those overgrown scaffolds on trees in close spacing, and allow another generation to take over. 7. great to have a cord attached to the pruner! How often have I dropped my Felcos and needed to climb down to retrieve?

P.S. I'd got one of those Stihl pole chainsaws last year. It was a bit too heavy for me to easily manage. But hired a former employee who was off work from a tree trimming company. He previously worked for a larger commercial orchard. It just took him only a few days (20 hrs) to bring down a huge amount of overhanging wood in 2 A of M7 trees! These were those upper tier scaffolds 3" dia and up which over time tend to overhand the aisles and lower scaffolds. He loved the balance of the unit. I could easily see getting that done every few years.

Final plug for these additions: Typical for pruning season are mini meditations/inspirations. I was up in a treetop when I remembered an interview with Paul O'Neil CEO of Westinghouse and business advisor to Presidents. Great guy. He was quoted as saying that an employer owed two things to his/her employees--respect and good tools. Perhaps it would be easier to get pruning help if I had better tools. It's often hard for farmers to respect themselves what with all the disparaging adjectives often associated with that calling. O'Neill would certainly push for good tools for the self employed as a duty to ourselves.

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Newer Topic](#) [Older Topic](#)

[Print View](#) [RSS](#)

Sorry, only registered users may post in this forum.

[Click here to login](#)

This [forum](#) is powered by [Phorum](#).