



[Home](#) > [Just Talk](#) > Topic

[Advanced](#)

Time Management

Posted by [Peter Topping](#)

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

[Peter Topping](#)

[Time Management](#)

December 06, 2016 04:52AM

Hey Guys!

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 8

I'm doing a cost analysis to estimate what endeavors are worthwhile and being someone who only has a handful of trees currently I cannot accurately gauge what the time commitment is per acre. If you keep track of your hours out in the orchard pruning, spraying, thinning, harvesting etc would you mind sharing? When I finish my analysis I'll be sure to start a separate thread and share it so we can compare notes on what added value products are most cost effective.

Cheers!

Zone 5b in Michigan

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

[Michael Phillips](#)

[Re: Time Management](#)

December 10, 2016 04:59PM

Moderator

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 621

Good chance here for this group of growers to make contributions and see what Peter can reveal. I'll go first . . . though it's been a long time since I tracked hours in a comprehensive way. What follows is part of an *Orchard Economics* write-up that goes to consultation clients. I expect this to trigger some hearty debate!

Labor Budget

Let's break orchard work down into five broad categories: pruning/brush chipping, understory management, spraying/fertility, hand thinning, and harvesting/grading. (Processing is its own beast, tied to one's value add plans.) These areas define the labor budget for any growing season. The extent of the crop certainly enters in here as a big year will require far more harvesting hours. The numbers provided here per acre are for an "average year" on a small farm where much of the work is hands-on. Equipment investment variables will shift these hourly approximations, as will management choices to support the fungal duff and other holistic connections. Ultimately, each orchardist needs to track actual hours to understand the labor he or she plans to invest in producing a marketable crop.

Pruning/brush chipping 120 hours

Understory management 60 hours

Spraying 40 hours

Hand thinning 80 hours

Harvesting/grading 240 hours

An orchard manager obviously needs help with certain tasks! The sum total here of 540 hours per acre has definite cost: An hourly wage of \$12 (without benefits) would put this at \$6,480. But again, there are many management and equipment variables here to improve on labor economics.

[Lost Nation Orchard](#)

Zone 4b in New Hampshire

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

[Peter Topping](#)

[Re: Time Management](#)

December 14, 2016 09:58PM

Thank you Michael!

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 8

Glad to see I was not too far off with my 500 hrs/acre estimate. I used an 8x14 dwarf planting of 388 trees. Included in my calculations were Pruning, Spraying, Branch Training, Mulching, Mowing, Fence Maintenance, Soil Amending, Thinning and Harvest.

Some Quick Calculations:

388 Trees/Acre (8x14)
~400 Bushel/Acre (Sourced from the University of Minnesota)
42 lbs/Bushel = 16800 Lbs
540 hrs Labor at \$12/hr
\$0.10/Half-Peck Bag (~\$0.02 per lb)
Retail \$1/Lb
Estimating 70% saleable fruit.
\$1000 per acre to cover costs of pesticides/fungicides

Costs Per Acre = \$7,816

Gross Per acre = \$11,760

***Net Per Acre = \$3,944**

**Net does not include taxes, Liability Insurances, Marketing, Property Tax or any Startup costs like Trees, planting, LLC, EIN number, Website Hosting/Domain, etc...*

I plan to do evaluations for added value products as well but I want to get a good understanding of basic costs of growing because they will influence our figures down stream. If you see any errors in my numbers or I have omitted an important piece of the puzzle do let me know so I can recalculate!

Zone 5b in Michigan

[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](#).