

Growing Fruit Trees



Fruit trees tend to be susceptible to pests and disease so watch the tree carefully and manage pests accordingly.

Apple

Apples are the most popular tree fruit for our area. They can be quite hardy and produce fruit year after year if cultivated correctly. Apples require cross pollination by another variety of apple that blooms about the same time. This means that two varieties have to be planted within a close range of each other (10-300 ft). Crab apples can also be used to cross with eating apples. They need a sheltered location to protect them from winter damage. Training them espaliered against a wall will provide more shelter for tender varieties. It is a good idea to prune your apple tree when the wood becomes old. This is known as “renovation”. Cutting out the old wood encourages new wood to grow and gives the tree a new burst of life.

Yellow Transparent: Well-known early summer apple, good for drying, freezing, sauce, juice and wine. Transparent pale yellow skin. Crisp, light-textured, juicy flesh. Very sweet flavour. Not good storer.

Apple Redfree: Medium size, glossy fruit with 90% bright red colour. Smooth, waxy, russet-free skin. Light flesh is crispy and juicy. Keeps 2 to 3 weeks.

Nova Easy Gro: Fruit is large, oblate, 80% red stripe over greenish yellow ground. Stores well in cold storage. Flesh is snow white, firm, crisp, mildly sweet, slightly juicy. Slightly tough at picking but mellows in storage. Recommended for cooking, salads, and fresh eating.

Norland: A very hardy and tasty red-streaked apple, early harvest, great for juice but doesn't keep well. Excellent for fresh eating, cooking, and baking.

Honeycrisp: This is a crisp, and predominantly sweet, modern variety from the USA. It was developed by the University of Minnesota specifically for growers in cold climates, and is one of the most cold-hardy varieties of apples. Red skin and cream flesh.

Bramley: Bramley's Seedling is the definitive English cooking apple. It produces heavy crops of large apples with a sharp acidic flavour, which cook down to a smooth puree. Green skin, white flesh.

Pear

Pear trees are not quite so popular but fruit quite well. Fruit is produced on spurs, which makes it amenable to being pruned for trellising. Pears are not reliably self-pollinating so it is best to plant two varieties that will bloom at the same time. Almost any pear will pollinate almost any other. It is best to plant them about 20 feet apart to ensure good fruit set. Pears are prone to several pests and diseases. It is important to monitor the trees and treat as needed.

Flemish Beauty: Large roundish pear, clear yellow skin dotted and marbled with red blush. Firm yellow white flesh melting when ripened off tree. Great for drying. Very productive, good for colder areas. Pick when very ripe.

Summercrisp: Summercrisp is a cold-hardy, early season pear that is being introduced by the University of Minnesota for use in cold climates. The fruit are best consumed without having been ripened; the eating quality is highest while the flesh is firm and crisp. Fruit should be refrigerated immediately after they are harvested, while the flesh is still firm and before any yellow colour is apparent. The fruit have a crisp, juicy texture and a sweet mild flavour.

Murray's Info Sheets

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Comice: The colouring will be green-yellow with an occasional red blush. The comice pear is one of the most fragile of varieties due to its juice-heavy content when ripe. Handle with care and you will be rewarded!

Ure: Fire blight resistant (the most important pear disease), its small 4-5cm fruit are produced in large numbers and are sweet and juicy. Excellent fresh or for cooking, canning and freezing. Harvest mid-September.

Cherry

There are two categories of cherries; sweet and sour. Before purchasing a tree you must decide which type is desired. Sweet cherries are more susceptible to cold winter temperatures than sour cherries. Sweet, which grow to be very large trees, are best for fresh eating while sour, much smaller trees, are ideal for pies and preserves. They must be planted in well drained soil. Sour cherries are self-fertile so only one is needed in the garden. Sweet cherries are mostly self-fertile, but ensure this is true for your selected variety. Birds are also big fans of cherries, so it may be necessary to cover a nearly ripe tree in netting.

Montmorency: A sour, self fruitful cherry. Hardy. Medium red fruit with yellow flesh.

Stella: A sweet, self fruitful cherry with a large black fruit. Hardy.

Crabapples

While often grown for ornamental reasons, crabapples produce fruit which are too tart for fresh eating but are suitable for canning, making applesauce, jams, etc. Crabapples are suitable for cold locations and can tolerate quite a bit of winter chill.

Plums

Damson: Every September: they are worth all the effort. They are, without exception, the best domesticated plum for cooking. They are round to oblong in shape and have smooth, shiny, deep purple to black skin. The firm amber flesh is very tasty with a spicy, tart flavour. Damson plums are great for fresh cooking, eating, jam, or making wine. The trees grow 12-15 ft tall and are susceptible to black knot disease.

Mount Royal: A very hardy European blue plum that is good eaten right off the tree or excellent for dessert or drying. Trees produce freestone, sweet, tender plums that ripen in late August. Self-pollinating.

Greengage: The greengage plum is deceptive in its looks, with colours of granny smith apples (suggesting tartness) mottled with fair rust coloured dots and an unassuming petit apricot size. What is revealed is a historically excellent fruit, complex in taste and texture. The greengage plum has an amber green flesh nearly the same colour of its skin, its texture unsurpassed in its tender firm quality, bursting with syrup-like juices when ripe. Its flavour is candy sweet and extremely low acid.

Mirabelle: The mirabelle is identified by its small, oval shape, smooth-textured flesh, and especially by its dark yellow colour which becomes flecked in appearance. They are known for being sweet and full of flavour. The fruit is primarily used in jams and pies, and its juice is commonly fermented for wine or distilled into plum brandy.

Italian Prune: Italian prunes can be kept as dwarf trees around 10-12 ft through careful pruning, a very manageable size. They are self fertile, winter hardy, and the luscious fruit can be eaten fresh, dried or canned. Small, dense, egg-shaped fruit with purple skin, freestone pits (they separate easily from the flesh) and yellow flesh. These are the plums that are made into prunes.

No matter which tree fruit you pick, these trees can provide wonderful, tasty fruit for years to come.