

Fruit Tree Guide



Selecting a Fruit Tree:

There are many things to consider before choosing a fruit tree.

1. What fruit do you want?
2. Will it grow in our climate and soil?
3. What you want to do with the fruit. (Bottle, pies, eat plain, etc.)
4. When will it be ripe? (You may want a few varieties you can harvest at different times.)
5. Do you have space in your yard and what is the size of the tree?
6. Does the tree need a pollinator?

Planting Your Tree:

1. Dig the hole 2x as wide and just as deep as the pot it is currently in.
2. Add mulch and use a root stimulator.
3. Water regularly.
4. Pick all fruit off after flowering for first 2-3 years to stimulate root and structural growth.

Pruning Fruit Trees:

Pruning a fruit tree can be very challenging. If you take off too much you will get several feet of growth each year and very little fruit to show for your hard work. Not enough pruning, or not pruning at all can result in inconsistent crops and stunted trees.

- Remember apples, pears, cherries, and plums produce best on the 2-3-year old wood.
- Peaches produce on last year's vegetative growth.

Fruit trees are pruned to keep the appropriate age of wood on the tree. (i.e. A lot of 1-year wood in peaches and 2-3-year wood in the others.) Controlling hormones is the key to a successful orchard or home garden. Plant hormones are found in the tip of each branch; the hormones suppress the growth of buds below the tip. These hormones can be manipulated by pruning. The influence of these hormones is most apparent on the vertical shoots and least on the flat limbs. So, pruning branches so they are near horizontal will stimulate new shoot development and initiate fruit buds. Try to do most of the pruning before the buds' break (i.e. it is best to prune them while it is still frozen outside and trees are dormant).

Pruning fruit trees helps to open up the tree so that each branch receives an equal amount of sunlight. Branches should be spaced evenly around the trunk and every 12" to 18" vertically on the trunk.

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Pest Control:

Pest control is one of the most important steps in producing good fruit.

1. **Dormant Spray:** Spraying with dormant spray will help protect your fruit tree from overwintering pests, larvae and eggs. You should apply dormant spray in late winter or early spring. Some tips gathered from starkbros.com include:
 - **Avoid** spraying dormant oil when temperatures are below 40°F
 - **Shake well** before adding dormant oil to desired water amount. Mix thoroughly*.
 - **Make sure** the application covers the entire surface of branches and trunk (don't miss the undersides of branches!)
2. Check out "The Home Orchard Pest Management Guide" (www.usus.extension.edu) for specific information on what to use for each kind of fruit and when to spray or treat your trees.

Thinning:

Thinning is the removal of some fruit after pollination. Its' purpose is to increase the size of each fruit to be harvested. It also helps to keep the tree from breaking under the fruit load. Also fruit that touches can create a great insect hiding place.

Apples, pears- Fruit come in multiples of 5 per spur

Peaches- Thin to 2-3 per bud site and watch the position down the branch. Space the peaches about every 6" on the branch.

Cherries do not need thinning.

Harvest:

Finally, the fruits of your labor.

1. Taste the fruit.
2. Touch the fruit.
3. Make sure you and your children wash the fruit before eating.
4. Pick in the morning before noon, that is when there is the most water in the fruit.

Storage:

1. Store in a cool place for longest life. (Do not save one bad piece of fruit, it will spoil the whole bunch.)
2. Keep bottled fruit in a dark place, they will keep their color longer.