

Fruit Tree Planting and Care



Pollination

With tart cherry, apricot and peach, a single tree will crop well when planted in the home garden. These fruits are referred to as "self-fruitful", and will set fruit with their own pollen. Those which are "self-unfruitful" will not bear fruit unless cross-pollinated with pollen from another cultivar. Apple, pear, plum and sweet cherry are good examples of self-unfruitful fruits which require pollen from another cultivar for fruit set. When any of the above fruits are grown, two or more cross-compatible cultivars must be planted together. Crabapples can also pollinate apples.

A cultivar selected as the pollen source should have a good overlap of bloom with the main cultivar. Pollen from pear, Japanese and European plum and cherry cultivars will not pollinate each other. Further, tart cherry pollen is not effective for sweet cherry, nor is Japanese for European plum cultivars. Apple cultivars such as Gravenstein, Crispin (Mutsu), Rhode Island Greening, Jonagold and Spigold have an uneven number of chromosomes (triploid) and will not pollinize each other or any other cultivar. A pollen source should be provided for these cultivars. In such cases, a second pollen source should be provided for the first cultivar pollinating a triploid one.

All sweet cherry cultivars except Vandalay, Tehranivee, and Stella, are self-unfruitful. Further, the pollen of some sweet cherries will not pollinate certain other cultivars. Self-fruitful cultivars will pollinate all sweet cherry cultivars.

In Japanese plums, Burbank is a satisfactory pollinizer for Early Golden and Shiro. Burbank and Early Golden are pollinated by Shiro. In European plums most cultivars will pollinate each other with a few minor exceptions. Generally three cultivars will ensure good pollination.

The main commercial pear cultivars are self-unfruitful. Using two or three cultivars will ensure good pollination.

Planting

Planting in spring rather than in the fall is recommended, especially in the colder districts of the province. You should plant without delay as soon as the ground can be worked, usually in early April to early May. If you are planting close to buildings, visualize the final size of the tree and leave adequate distance between it and the building.

Before planting the tree, trim off all damaged or dead root ends. Dig a hole, not too deep, but large enough to accommodate the root system without crowding. Keep the topsoil separate to place over and around the roots. Do not put fertilizer or manure in the planting hole. It is also a good idea to place a sturdy post within 20 cm of the newly-planted tree and tie the tree lightly to it. This post can be used to keep the tree upright and straight and serves as an anchor for the trunk for the first few years.

To prevent scion rooting, dwarf trees must be planted so that 2 cm to 3 cm of rootstock shank is above the soil line, otherwise, the scion cultivar may root above the graft union, resulting in a loss of the dwarfing effect.

Tramp the soil firmly around the roots. Leave a slight depression to catch rain water or for watering during the first summer. Water thoroughly after planting. For rodent protection, place a 6 mm mesh galvanized wire cylinder or other type of tree guard around the trunk after planting. The guard should extend 5 cm to 8 cm below and at least 30 cm above the surface of the ground.

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Growing backyard fruit trees ranks as one of the most popular gardening pastimes in America. It lets you pick and choose your favorite kind of fruit from the hundreds of varieties available, and gives you full control over how your food is raised. While specific care guidelines vary widely depending on the exact kind of fruit tree you're raising, several general strategies and tips can help you successfully care for any young fruit tree after you've planted it in your yard.

1 Water young fruit tree once every other week. Most fruit trees require that you apply enough water to moisten the soil to a depth of 3 to 4 feet. This is the depth at which most fruit trees extend their roots.

2 Fertilize your young fruit tree once every year, applying fertilizer in the spring before the tree starts producing new growth. In its first year, use 1/10 pound of 10-10-10 fertilizer, then increase by 1/10 pound every year thereafter. Spread the fertilizer in a band around the fruit tree, approximately 2 feet from the tree's trunk. Water immediately after fertilization to help carry the fertilizer's nutrients down to your fruit tree's roots.

3 Trim your young fruit tree with pruning shears. Immediately after planting it, cut the top of the tree off at approximately 3 feet of height. In the first summer after you've planted it, identify four uniformly spaced-apart branches on its trunk and remove all other branches or sprouts. In every winter thereafter, trim back new growth when the tree is dormant. The amount of new growth that needs trimming varies significantly by fruit variety. For example, an apple tree needs less than a quarter of its new growth removed while nectarines need half of all its new growth cut. Consult your local cooperative extension service for fruit-specific guidelines.

4 Keep your young fruit tree pest- and disease-free using preventive orchard care. Weed regularly, because weeds often harbor pests and disease while stealing soil nutrients and water. Additionally, always pickup and discard any fallen fruit, rake and remove fallen weeds often, and trim off any dead branches as those often attract rot-related diseases.

5 Treat the fruit tree if pests or disease occur. There are dozens of such potential problems, depending on your region and the type of fruit you have. In most cases, a standard 50 percent concentration copper spray, available in most garden stores and nurseries, resolves most common fruit tree diseases. Meanwhile, insecticidal soap treats most common pests like aphids and mites. Apply such products according to their manufacturer-specific guidelines, as toxicity varies widely by product.

Things You Will Need

- 10-10-10 garden fertilizer
- Pruning shears
- Copper spray (optional)
- Insecticidal soap (optional)