

Tips On Growing Fruit Trees

Here are a few things to keep in mind when planting and growing fruit trees...

- Choose a good location, one with all day sun along with good drainage and good soil.
- Choose the best varieties. Here at Sunnyside we've done that for you, any of the varieties we carry are great options for our area. Try staggering ripening times so that you have fruit all season long and don't be afraid to try some of the new dwarf or semi-dwarf trees.
- Watch for pollination requirements. Most apples, pears and Japanese plums will need pollinizing, meaning it requires bees (either honey or Mason which are native). Other trees like peaches, European plums and most cherries are self-pollinating.
- Follow good planting practices – compost, starter fertilizer, make a basin.
- Space varieties depending on pruning and rootstocks – usually 10 to 15 feet apart.
- Staking is not usually necessary, except to stabilize the first season.
- Watering is very important. New trees need more frequency, older established trees may be fine with once or twice a month in the summer.
- Feeding is important to do in the spring.
- Thinning is also very important.
 - Do it within 40 days of full bloom for apples
 - Do it within 60 days of full bloom for pears
 - Apples – leave the King bloom
 - Pears (especially Asian pears) – save the middle fruit in the cluster
 - Peaches – thin to 4 to 6 inches apart
- The best method to harvest is to taste. Cherries, plums, apples, and Asian pears will ripen on the tree. European pears have to be picked green and allowed to ripen off the tree.
- Insects to watch out for...
 - Apples – codling moths, monitor with traps and spray 2 weeks after petals fall
 - Apple Maggot – use booties and/or traps to prevent infestation

- Cherries – pear slugs
 - Pears – codling moths and pear slugs
 - Everything – aphids, mites, scale, thrips
 - Dormant Sprays – actually delayed dormant sprays – oil and/or sulfur and/or copper. We prefer sulfur for pears and apples, and copper for all stone fruits
 - Summer sprays – apply as needed
 - **NEVER spray when the tree is in bloom!**
- Diseases to watch out for...
 - Apples – scab, mildew, anthracnose
 - Pears – scab sometimes
 - Stone fruits – brown rot (AKA blossom and twig blight)
 - Lichens and Algae – not really diseases
- Pruning is important as you'll want to train the tree(s) for the first two years. Once the main branching pattern is established then only prune for fruit production.
 - Prune in winter and summer
 - Know where the fruit is produced
 - 2 to 3 year old wood for pears, apples, cherries and European plums
 - Last year's wood for peaches and Japanese plums