

CHOOSING AND PLANTING FRUIT

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO GROW?

Fruit trees that do well in our climate include:

Apple, Cherry, Damson, Gage, Pear, Plum, Pear

Some nuts can also be grown, but generally need more space:

Almond, Hazel, Sweet chestnut, Walnut.

Good soft fruits include:

Black currant, White Currant, Red currant, Blackberry, Gooseberry, Raspberry, Strawberry, Blueberry, Rhubarb, Strawberry and things like Tayberries that are a cross bred fruit like a large tasty raspberry.

Some fruits need shelter from frost or wind, but can be grown with care.

Apricot, Peach, Grape, Kiwi Fruit, Fig, Passion Fruit

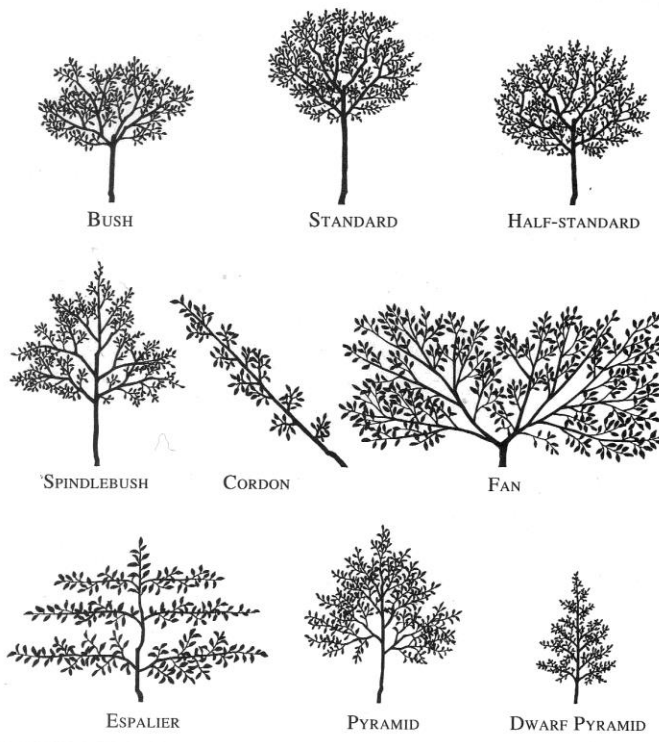
HOW MUCH SPACE DO YOU HAVE?

Most people who live in a city have a small garden, but it is still possible to grow fruit trees. Apples, Pears and Plums are available that have been grafted onto the roots of a smaller plant, so they never get too big. These are called Dwarfing Rootstocks and have different names depending on the type of fruit.

If you are confused when buying a tree, the nursery will explain the final height.

Apples on rootstocks M27 and M9 are usually best for small spaces.

TREE FORMS



You can also restrict the size of a tree by training it, against a wall for example. Some shapes require skill, but the simplest method is a cordon and this yields the highest proportion of fruit out of all the trained fruits compared to the area the plant occupies. The figure on the previous page shows the shapes for training fruit trees.

Fruit trees on very dwarf rootstocks can even be grown in containers and will do well in a sunny, sheltered spot in a pot with a diameter greater than 30cm. Figs can do very well in pots.

MAKING SURE YOU GET A CROP

Some fruits will pollinate themselves, so one tree is all you need. Other trees need pollen from another tree to produce fruit. For example, if you have one apple tree and there are no others nearby then you may never get fruit so you would need to plant two and they would have to be in flower at the same time. Apples are given a pollination group from 1 to 5 according to their flowering time. If you choose two varieties in the same group, then they should cross pollinate each other and you will get apples. Sometimes apple trees in group 3 or 5 will also pollinate trees in group 4 if the flowers are out at the same time. There is a similar system for pears and for plums, although many plums are self fertile so you will only need one.

CHOOSING A GOOD PLANT

Fruit plants can be bought in a plant pot, or bare rooted.

The container grown stock can be bought and planted all year round. It will have spent some time sitting in the container at the nursery which may mean it's roots are a little restricted. It will be more expensive.

Bare root plants are lifted from the fields where they have been growing in late autumn/early winter when all growth has stopped and they are dormant for the winter. They are light and easy to transport, there is usually a huge choice of varieties and they are cheaper.

You can buy quite large fruit trees and some that have already been trained into the shape of a fan or espalier for example.

However, younger plants usually establish better, and cost a lot less than mature ones.

A one year old tree with no side branches is called a maiden whip. A two-year-old tree with a few side branches is called a feathered maiden. Either of these are good to buy to train to the shape you want.

PLANTING and CARE

Most fruits like a sunny, sheltered site best. Some, especially things like Raspberries and Blackberries will do fine with a little shade as they are woodland fruits.

Blueberries need an acidic soil and are best grown in pots with special ericaceous compost.

Your fruit trees and bushes will need a well drained soil and it's best to improve the soil before planting by digging in plenty of well rotted manure or garden compost.

Supports will be needed depending on the fruit you are growing, for example sturdy posts and wires for Raspberries, or stakes for fruit trees.

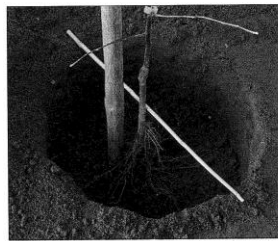
The RHS recommend that trees with dwarf rootstocks are permanently staked.

Here are some guides to planting fruit trees, cordons and bushes. Note that if your tree is grafted onto a rootstock, identify where the join is (usually a kink or a bulge in the main stem) and make sure this is above ground after planting.

PLANTING A FRUIT TREE



1 Dig a hole one third wider than the tree's root system. Drive in a stake to a depth of 45cm (18in) about 7cm (3in) from the centre of the hole.



2 Slightly mound the soil at the base of the hole and place the tree in the centre. Use a cane to check that the soil mark on the stem is level with the soil surface.

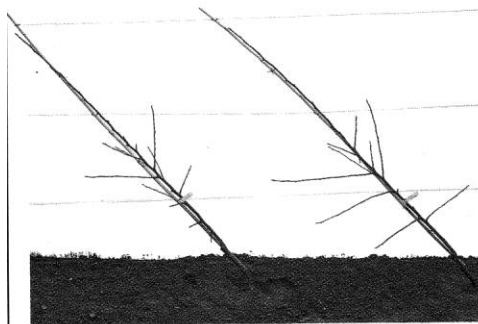


3 Spread out the tree's roots, then gradually fill the hole with soil. Firm to ensure that the tree is well anchored and that there are no air pockets between the roots.



4 Attach a buckle-and-spacer to the top of the stake and then to the tree so that the cushion is between the stem and the stake (see inset). Adjust as necessary.

PLANTING CORDONS

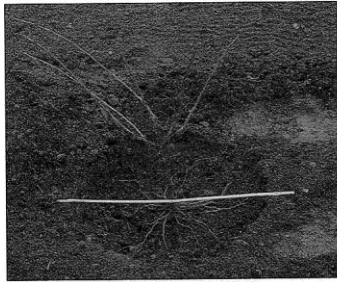


IN THE OPEN GROUND
Space trees 75cm (2½ft) apart (top). Attach a cane at an angle of 45° to horizontal wires (bottom left) stretched between sturdy posts. Tie each tree securely to a cane (bottom right).



AGAINST A FENCE
Fix wires 10–15cm (4–6in) away from the fence to allow for the growth of the trees and to promote good air circulation. Plant the trees 15–22cm (6–9in) from the fence.

PLANTING A FRUIT BUSH



1 Dig a hole large enough to accommodate the roots of the bush when spread out. Place a cane across the hole to check that the level of the surrounding soil is the same as the soil mark on the main stem.



2 Backfill the hole with soil; tread in the soil gently to ensure that no air pockets remain between the roots. Rake over the soil lightly to level the surface.

Continuing care will include watering a young plant well in dry spells, annual pruning to maintain a good shape, and thinning the fruit.

Thinning is needed so that each fruit has a chance to reach a reasonable size, and to stop over laden branches from breaking under the weight of the fruit.

Remove any damaged or deformed fruit, then thin the rest to be 5cm to 8cm apart.