

FRESH FRUIT TREES

How to squeeze fruit trees into home gardens

Pollination & Chilling factors for successful care of fruit trees/cropping

How to prepare and plant trees for success everytime. While many of us would like to grow our own fruit at home, one of the major difficulties is a lack of room. Most fruit trees have a spread to 3 or 5 metres. As garden areas are shrinking all around WA, in some cases to a balcony, the goal of growing fruit and nuts may seem to be a diminishing dream.

Here are some space saving ways to fit fruit trees into small gardens.

Trees shaped to a single trunk can be jammed together as close as 1 metre apart to make a fruiting hedge. Multigrafted fruit trees are also great space savers. It is possible to buy one tree with 2 or 3 different varieties grafted on it. Usually, the three varieties are all of the same family, for example apples. Multigrafted trees usually combine cross pollinating varieties where this is necessary. A viable alternative is to multiplant two or more trees in one hole. This works well and is ideal where you need a pair of trees for cross pollination.

Miniature peaches and nectarines only grow to around 1.5 to 2 metres tall. The flower show in spring is delightful and new varieties have excellent flavour characteristics that compare well with the best of the traditional taller varieties.

One of the most elegant ways to grow deciduous fruit trees in a confined space is to espalier them against a wall. On north or west facing walls, almonds, apricot, Japanese plum, nectarine, fig, mulberry, peaches and persimmon are best. In warm winter areas around Perth and near coastal suburbs it's best to plant nashi, apple and pear on a south or east facing wall. Cordon planting involves close planting of single stem trees at a 45 degree angle. In a 5 metre space you can grow 8 different varieties.

If the only area you have to grow your orchard is a balcony or a patio, it is still possible to pot one of the miniature fruiting trees such as "Pixzee" Peach, "Nectazee" Nectarine or Ballerina apples to produce a delicious crop of fresh fruit. Blueberries are small shrubs to about a metre high that can also be readily grown in a tub. You can grow any variety of citrus in pots as well.

Climbing vines like grapes, Kiwifruit and passionfruit are great value in small spaces. All that's needed is a break in the paving so they can get their roots down into the soil and a patch of blue sky to aim at and they're off and growing.

So, if you really want to grow fruit at home no matter how small the area, it can be done because bearing trees are so adaptable and trainable you can squeeze them in just about anywhere.

Pollination & Chilling Factors for Successful Cropping

Certain fruit trees need a pollinating partner in order to bear fruit. The main families of trees needing pollination include almonds, apples, pears, Nashi, plums and cherries. Pollen needs to travel to and from each of two trees. Two trees of the same variety will not lead to cross pollination.

Bees are the main transfer agents. Trees need to be planted within sight of each other. Plant breeders are working to produce "low chill" varieties that will flower and fruit in relatively warm winter climates. Many peaches, nectarines and Japanese plums can now be grown in the Metropolitan Area with great success.

It is important to choose these varieties if planting in areas that do not get regular winter frosts. Artificial chill can be created on the plains by growing high to moderate chill apples, for example, on the south or east side of walls or

buildings. Here shade keeps the plant artificially cool in winter.

Planting Deciduous Fruiting Trees & Vines

These plants are available during June, July and August when they are in a dormant state. It is essential that the roots be kept moist prior to planting.

Soil Preparation

All soils, regardless of whether they are sand or clay, definitely require preparation before any fruiting plants will thrive.

Dig a hole approx. 1 metre diameter by half a metre depth.

Mix 1 part of garden soil with 1 part Bio-ganic. Add a few handfuls of Blood and Bone mix to this soil mix. Gently position plant in the hole on top of a thick layer of improved soil mixture and back fill around plant the same mixture. The bud union or graft should be 5cm above the eventual soil level. Firm down soil mix around the plant, creating a basin to trap water. Mulch

well but keep it away from the stems. Thoroughly soak the soil to eliminate any air spaces around the roots. Begin feeding once the weather warms with Waldecks All Purpose Plant Food. Fruit Trees need Waldecks Bio-ganic

In Western Australia much of our garden soil is "hungry" and plants struggle to obtain much needed food and moisture. By planting with Waldecks Bio-ganic you give trees and shrubs a far better start in life and better crops too. Waldecks Bio-ganic is especially formulated to give your plants everything they need to encourage fast, healthy root growth. A 100% organic, this 3 in 1 soil enricher, contains peat, manures and natural trace elements. At planting time add 3-4 spadefuls to each hole and mix well. The results speak for themselves.

Pests and Diseases in the Fruit Garden

If you are able to identify your pest or disease (your local nursery or garden centre may be helpful), then using the correct preventative method will be much easier. In broad terms, the most common problems for the home garden fall into two categories:

Plant Diseases, which include fungus and related problems. Bacteria and related problems. In general, plant diseases are controlled by a group of chemicals called "fungicides". Insect Pests, which include Aphids, moths and caterpillars, thrips, mites, grubs, beetles and earwigs etc. Insect pests are controlled by a group of pesticide chemicals called "insecticides and miticides".

Preventive recommendations:

Recurrent problems are best treated with a preventive spray programme, for example codling moth because when the symptom is obvious, it is far too late to spray. Some other pests and diseases only require to be sprayed if the problem becomes visible, for example aphids.

All deciduous fruit trees - for preventive spraying, the cycle begins around the first week of May in Australia.

Timing: First week of May

Purpose: To clean up spores and as a nitrogen supplement

Treatment: Apply Urea foliar spray or use lime sulphur

Timing: Leaf fall of the first cultivar to lose its leaves.

Purpose: General Maintenance

Treatment: Apply a comprehensive copper spray to the whole deciduous garden. Include those trees which have not yet lost their leaves, for example plums.

Timing: Winter

Purpose: General Maintenance

Treatment: Apply a general spray of Winter Oil. This is to clean up any over-wintering problems of scale and mealy bugs.