

Edible Landscaping

By Sherry Fuller



Fruiting plants can add another dimension to your landscaping. Many fruit trees, shrubs and smaller plants are easy to grow, but need some specialized care to bear good crops. Many vegetables are quite attractive and can be interspersed into other landscaping.

LOCATION – Fit into regular landscaping or have an area for fruit production. Most need full sun to produce. Plant cold sensitive varieties in protected areas but not against the south or west sides of buildings since the extra heat there causes them to bloom early and often freeze.

SOIL & WATER – Add compost to a 6-10' area surrounding trees and 3-4' surrounding shrubs, if practical, to improve the soil. Most fruit trees prefer deep watering every other week; planting in turf that is watered very frequently can cause root rot and iron chlorosis.

POLLINATION – Many fruit trees need two plants of different varieties for pollination and hence fruiting to occur. Ideal spacing for pollination is under 50 yards.

FERTILIZER – Most fruit plants need annual fertilizer to produce optimal fruit. Nitrogen is almost always necessary and phosphorus is often needed. Apples and pears need the most. Fertilize to encourage the following amounts of new growth each year. Non-bearing apples, pears and cherries – 12-36"; non-bearing peaches – 18-24"; bearing apples and cherries – 6-10"; bearing pears and peaches – 12-18".

PRUNING – Use to keep plants within bounds and to keep good air flow and light penetration into plants. Don't shear at the same location each year.

PROTECTION FROM BIRDS & SQUIRRELS – Netting, bird scare tape

PROBLEMS – Insects – Use dormant oil right before buds break to kill overwintering aphids, mites and scale. Spray apples and pears every 7-14 days starting after petal drop to prevent codling moths (wormy apples). Don't spray while blooming since it will kill bees visiting the trees then. Traps – hanging jugs of molasses and water mixed 1:10 – will trap adults helping you time preventive sprays better.

Fireblight – Use copper or Bordeaux mix sprays ASAP after hail damage to prevent on apples and pears unless your varieties are resistant. Prune out affected twigs 12" below damage and keep tools sterilized.

Iron chlorosis – Caused by too much water, poorly drained soils, lack of organic material in soil – add chelated iron annually.



FRUIT TREES

APPLES – Some are partially self-fruitful (especially Golden Delicious) but all will produce better with a different variety for pollination. Winesap, Jonagold and Crispin will not pollinate any varieties. Trees with multiple varieties grafted together are available.

- Standard trees grow from 20 x 20' to 40 x 40'; semi-dwarf varieties grow 12-15 x 10'
- Coddling moths are biggest problem here. Red and Golden Delicious, McIntosh, Empire, Liberty and Jonathan are resistant to fireblight.

PEARS – Only Bartlett and Comice are partially self-fertile; others need cross pollination.

- Pears grow to be 15-25 x 12-40' tall and wide
- Pears are susceptible to fireblight, but not quite so prone to coddling moths as apples

APRICOTS – Trees are a beautiful addition to a landscape and one of the most drought-tolerant and pest-free of fruit trees, but they bloom early and flowers or young fruit are often frozen.

- Most varieties are self-fertile
- Grow 15-30 x 20-30' tall and wide

PEACHES AND NECTARINES – Peaches tend to be susceptible to insect and disease problems but there's nothing quite so delicious as a fresh-picked peach or nectarine.

- Most peaches are self-fertile but J.H.Hale, Earlihale and Haleberta are not.
- They grow about 15-20' tall and wide

SWEET CHERRIES – Tend to bloom early and have frost damage some years.

- Stella and Lapin are the only partially self-fertile varieties. Bing, Lambert and Royal Ann will not pollinate each other
- Grow 25-40 x 30' tall and wide

PIE CHERRIES – Bloom later so fruit most years. All are self-fertile.

- Standard varieties grow 20 x 20' while dwarf varieties stay 8-12 x 10'

PLUMS – Reliable fruiting most years. One of the overall easiest fruit types to grow.

- Stanley, Santa Rosa, Green Gage and Damson are self-fruitful. Others need a pollinator.
- Grow 15 x 20'

CHOCHECHERRY – Native large shrub or small tree with small, edible, black fruit in clusters. Good for jelly and birds.

CRABAPPLE – Not generally grown for fruit, but Dolgo has the largest fruit and makes good jelly.



SHRUBBY FRUIT

GOOSEBERRY – Very reliable; light green to pale pink, 1/2" fruit; self-pollinating. Can produce 4-8 quarts on a mature plant.

CURRANTS – Red, black and white-fruited varieties; Red Lake is the best for eating, but prefers a cooler climate; native varieties Golden and Alpine have small, edible fruit and are easier to grow. Crandall Clove is a form of our native and has exceptionally large, tasty fruit. Self-pollinating.

JOSTABERRY – Hybrid of gooseberry and black currant. Higher yielding, thornless and disease resistant. Self-pollinating.

BLUEBERRY – Difficult to grow here since they need very acidic soil to thrive. Use lots of peat moss and acid-type fertilizer or grow in containers. Need two different varieties to produce berries.

SASKATOON – *Amelanchier alnifolia* - A relative of our native serviceberry; easy to grow; self-fruitful; fruit tastes like blueberries but smaller and somewhat less juicy. All serviceberries, from trees to shrubs, have tasty fruit.

HONEYBERRY – *Lonicera caerulea* - New to garden centers here, these are edible, shrubby honeysuckles with elongated, blue berries. Taste like blueberries but more tart. Very hardy. Need two varieties for pollination. Caution! The common, red-fruited shrubby honeysuckle berries are mildly poisonous.

ELDERBERRY – Tiny black berries in clusters on large shrub growing 8-10 feet tall and wide. Cutleaf, golden and variegated varieties somewhat smaller and bear fewer fruits. Fruit is used for wine or jelly and birds love it.

NANKING CHERRY – Very hardy shrub growing 6-8' tall with fruit that tastes like pie cherries but smaller. Beautiful and very attractive to birds.

AMERICAN PLUM – Native large shrub or small tree bearing small, slightly sour plums. Great for jelly.

OTHER FRUITS

RASPBERRY – Red and yellow varieties best on the Front Range. Can produce 1 quart per mature plant. Mature plants sucker prolifically.

- Fall bearing varieties best on Front Range – produce fruit on first-year canes – good varieties are Heritage, Autumn Britten, Anne (yellow) and Fall Gold – prune all canes to the ground after fruiting.
- Summer bearing varieties produce berries on second-year canes – Boyne and Latham are good for us – remove canes that fruited but leave first-year canes for next year's berries

BLACKBERRY – Older varieties fruit on second-year canes so they often freeze in our winters and don't produce. Newer varieties Prime-Jan and Prime-Jim produce on first-year canes and avoid the problem.

GRAPES – Vines can be used to cover a fence or shade an arbor. Prune hard for best fruiting. Unpicked fruit can be very messy and attract wasps and bees. Best planted in spring.

- Good seedless varieties for our area include Himrod (white); Reliance and Canadice (red). Seeded varieties for juice and jelly include Concord (blue) and Niagara (white).

STRAWBERRY – Plant about one foot apart and remove most runners. Fertilize in July. Everbearers are best for our area – good varieties include Fort Laramie, Ogallala and Ozark Beauty. Tristar and Tribute can produce over a longer season.