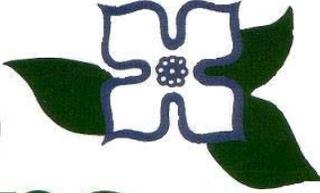


# Surry Gardens



## FRUIT TREES

Fruit trees are a great addition to your landscape. They provide both beauty and a satisfying harvest. Strolling by a flowering tree, with its rich sweet fragrance, can only add to your enjoyment of springtime. The flavor of freshly picked fruit, from perhaps a rarer variety, cannot compare to the supermarket product.

**FIRST START WITH A PLAN.** Read about the plants in which you are interested. Select varieties for your microclimate. Books we recommend are:

Bennett, Jennifer. **THE HARROWSMITH BOOK OF FRUIT TREES.** Camden House Publishing, 1991.

Hill, Lewis. **FRUITS AND BERRIES FOR THE HOME GARDEN.** Storey Communications, Inc., 1992.

Otto, Stella. **THE BACK YARD ORCHARDIST.** Otto Graphics, 1994.

Most fruit bearing plants need 6-8 hours of sun a day, and well drained soil with a pH of 6-7 (except blueberries which require an acid soil). One inch of water per week is "cheap fruit insurance". An annual application of a balanced fertilizer in the spring is beneficial. Mulch the trees well to keep the roots cool, to conserve moisture, and to prevent damage from lawn mowers. Keep the mulch 6-12" away from the trunk in summer and move it further away in the fall. This prevents damage from fungal diseases and rodents. Mouse and small animal guards can be useful.

Pruning techniques vary from tree to tree. Research the proper methods and objectives for the specific trees. In general a selection of sharp good quality tools make the job easier and safer for the tree.

Picking fruit is an important technique. First you should avoid bruising the fruit as damaged fruit loses quality quickly. Secondly, fruits that rely on spurs for future production, such as apples and pear, will lose productivity if the spurs are damaged. A "twist and lift" technique is preferred. Cradle the fruit in the palm of your hand, support the stem between your thumb and index finger, slowly turn your hand while lifting the fruit upward toward the spur. If ripe the fruit should break off easily.

### APPLE

From the Garden of Eden, to Snow White, to Johnny Appleseed, apples have played an important part in our history. They are a favorite, long-lived, and beautiful addition to any landscape. When considering an apple tree don't forget the crab apples with their tart but delicious fruit.

Plant two varieties of approximately the same blooming time to ensure pollination. Plant standards 30', semi-dwarfs 15', and dwarfs 10' apart. Standards will take 8 years to bear fruit, and dwarfs 3-6 years.

Apples are susceptible to a variety of fungal diseases and will need spraying several times during the season. To minimize the need for spraying you might want to consider one of the more disease resistant varieties.

## APRICOT

These large sturdy trees are the very earliest to flower. Locate apricot trees where the early buds are protected from drying winter winds and late frosts. Their beautiful white blossoms make a stunning accent even in years when fruit production may be slight.

As soon as fruit forms it should be thinned to at least 2" apart. This prevents the tree from settling into a biennial cycle of large crops of small fruit one year and none the following year. Trees take approximately 4-5 years to bear fruit. The trees are fast growing, be careful not to over feed them.

## BLUEBERRY

No other fruit plays a more important role in Maine as the blueberry. The cultivars we offer provide not only a good harvest but also serve as attractive plantings.

Blueberries prefer a well-drained sandy soil, high in organic matter with an acid pH of 4.5-5.2 Full sun is necessary. Space the plants 6-8' apart in rows 8-10' apart. The roots are very shallow so be careful cultivating around the bushes. An annual pruning, January-March, is helpful to open up the plants. Most fruit is produced on one year old shoots. Three to four weeks after planting apply a fertilizer made for "acid-loving" plants like rhododendron.

## RASPBERRY, BLACKBERRY

In the first year plant the berries 3' apart in rows 6' apart. Keep watered thoroughly and fertilize with a liquid fertilizer. Mulch plants well. Locate them where you will be able to prune them. The roots are perennial but the canes are biennial.

In the following spring add to the mulch and apply a light helping of fertilizer. In the fall cut back canes to about 4'. Install a fence or other support. Don't expect a large crop the first year, the best yields are to come.

Each year thereafter add more mulch and fertilizer in the spring. Remove any suckers as they appear. In late summer cut canes which produced fruit. Thin remaining canes to 6" apart.

## CHERRY

Sour cherries are self-fruitful. Most sweet cherries require two different types, however new varieties have been developed which are self-pollinating. Sour cherries will not pollinate sweet. Sweet cherries do best in light, sandy soils, while sour cherries can thrive in heavier soils. Cherry trees are light feeders. Over feeding produces a tree that grows too fast and is susceptible to disease.

## GRAPE

Grapes require sandy soil, as it warms up quickly and retains the heat. Be sure to plant grapes where they will receive the maximum amount of sun and not be shaded by trees or buildings. In our area plant them in a heat pocket, shaded from north winds. The soil should not be overly fertile or the vines will grow too fast and not bear well. Too much fertilizer can cause winter injury and delay the ripening of the fruit. Plant vines 8-10' apart and prepare a strong, permanent trellis. A yearly, systematic pruning will lead to a small crop in the third year.

## PEACH

The taste of a tree ripened peach cannot be compared to that bought at the supermarket. Dry, sandy soils are the best for peaches. Fertilize only when needed, and then only in the spring. Because peach trees are vigorous growers they need severe pruning and the fruit needs to be thinned to 5-6" apart. Peach trees are not long lived so you will have to make more frequent plantings.

**Peach leaf curl** is caused by the fungus *Taphrina deformans*. It occurs commonly in Maine and both nectarines and peaches are affected. Although this fungus can infect the fruit, most losses are due to reduced vigor caused by defoliation. Subsequent refoliation uses energy reserves which would otherwise be used to produce fruit. The weakened trees are also more susceptible to winter injury. When the fruit is infected, it is likely to drop before maturity.

**Peach leaf curl symptoms:**

As the name implies, the disease is expressed as distorted or curled leaf tissue. These puckered, thickened leaves often have a characteristic reddish-purple color where the distortions occur. The symptoms may begin early in the season as the leaves are unfolding. Later, the color turns to a powdery gray on the upper leaf surface as the fungus begins to produce spores. As the season progresses and the weather turns warmer and drier, the leaves turn yellow and dry then drop from the tree.

Young twigs can also be infected. They are stunted and may be distorted and thickened and may die. Leaves that grow from such twigs are also stunted and distorted. Infected twigs tend to die easily. Fruit infections are not common but appear as wrinkled or swollen reddish lesions which lack the normal peach fuzz

## FRUIT TREE PRUNING

**Apples, pears, cherries** and **plums** produce their best fruit on 2-3 yr old wood.  
**Peaches** put their fruit on last year's vegetative growth.

**YOUNG TREES:**

Develop 3-5 main branches starting 24" above ground. Space to fill all sides of tree with largest diameter branches. Strive for seasonal growth to be 18"-30" for first three years.

Prune young trees late March.

At the first fruiting, thin judiciously to avoid overloading trees. For apples, pears and peaches, thin to one fruit every six inches.

**MATURE TREES:**

Examine for past growth. Ten inches annual extension growth is ideal. Prune harder when following a heavy crop.

Prune lighter after a small or non-existent crop.

Prune to develop a Christmas tree shape. At top of tree, remove limbs completely that are more than half the diameter of main trunk or leader. No heading cuts.

Two limbs competing for same space, remove one completely. Do not stub.

Upright vigorous branches leave alone or remove completely.

Drooping branches, prune back to an upward pointing branch.

Prune no more than 25% of total branch volume at one time. (Exception: Stunted trees with little or no new growth, severe pruning can be beneficial.).

Prune moderately every year rather than severely every few years.

Cut out dead and diseased wood completely.

