

how to grow fruit trees & berries

Nothing is better than your own home grown juicy fruit. Adding fruit trees to your garden offers you everything an ornamental tree does, but with the added bonus of fruit crops. You don't need to start a large orchard; it's easy to incorporate a few fruit trees into your garden planting or even grow them in pots.

Choosing the Right Variety

Part of your fruit tree selection should be to ensure you have a year-round supply of fresh fruit. You can easily do this by planting a few varieties that crop at different times of the year.

With a lot of fruit trees, particularly pip and stone varieties, new plants are available in nurseries from late May till late August. When choosing your tree, it's important to select vigorous young trees, avoiding any older trees that may have been in a planter bag or pot for a couple of years.

If you are purchasing berries, they will look odd when you first see them; just a simple stem. Raspberries or blackberries won't have a lot of growth on them, but will grow very rapidly once spring arrives. Most berry plants require something to be trained on (*to grow up*) such as against a north facing wall, on a trellis or on wires they can be attached to as they grow.

Regional Varieties

There are many fruit tree and berry varieties to choose from. **Incredible Edibles®** have a wide selection of berries and some fruit trees to choose from, along with dwarf varieties for gardens with limited space.

It is very important to choose fruit tree varieties that will grow and fruit the best in your climate. For instance, some varieties such as citrus are frost sensitive, and others like stone fruit need winter chilling for fruit to set. While you can attempt to grow them outside their regions, you may experience varying levels of success. Some examples of what to grow where are:

VARIETY	IDEAL REGION
CHERRIES Varieties to try: Dawson, Rainier (<i>early to mid season</i>), Lapins (<i>mid season</i>), Stella.	Need winter chilling and hot dry summers. Suited to the South Island.
AVOCADOS Hass (<i>the most common variety and self fertile</i>). Varieties to try: Bacon, Hashimoto, Reed, Fuerte.	Frost free areas of the North Island (<i>good shelter and free draining soil are important</i>).
CITRUS FRUITS Varieties to try: Bearrs Lime, Cipo Orange, Sweetie (<i>mandarin</i>), Lemon Meyer, Tahitian Lime	Warmer parts of the North Island and the northern parts of the South Island. See our How to Grow Citrus guide for more information on growing citrus.
KIWIFRUIT Varieties to try: Hayward (<i>note: limited varieties available to PSA</i>)	Warmer parts of both North and South Islands.

STONE FRUIT (*peaches, nectarines and apricots etc*).

Varieties to try: Peaches: Spring Crest, Red Haven, Paragon, Golden Queen.
 Nectarines: Snow Queen, Goldmine, Fantasia, Red Gold.
 Apricots: Moorepark, Sundrop, Trevatt.

Need winter chilling. Suited to central Otago, Nelson and the Hawkes Bay region of New Zealand.

BERRIES (*boysenberries, blackberries, blueberries etc*)

Varieties to try: Blackberries/boysenberries: Barrel of Berries, Black Satin. Blueberries: Blue Dawn™, Blue Magic™, Summer Blue, Tasty Blue™.
 Raspberries: Aspiring™, Ebony™, Ivory™, Waiau.

Can be grown almost throughout New Zealand but produce better and healthier fruit where there is a cooler climate.

APPLES

Varieties to try: Gala, Braeburn, Splendour, Fuji, Granny Smith.
Varieties to try: Little Rascals, Teachers Pet.

Can be grown well in most parts of New Zealand.

FEIJOAS

Gemini, Marion, Triumphs, Wikitu.
Varieties to try: Apollo, Arhart, Bambina™ (*dwarf*), Den's Choice, White or Golden Goose, Kakapo, Karamea, Pounamu, Unique

Can be grown well in most parts of New Zealand (*apart from exceptionally cold climates*).

GUAVAS

Varieties to try: Cherry varieties (*more frost hardy*): Red Cherry (*makes the finest jelly of any fruit*), Yellow Cherry
 Tropical varieties (*very frost tender*): Red Sensation, The Guava

Warmer parts of the North Island and the northern part of the South Island.
 Note: Tropical varieties are exceptionally frost tender.

Fruiting

It can take two to three years before your fruit tree (*depending on variety*) is well established so don't expect it to be laden with fruit immediately, but the beauty of fruit trees is that they bear fruit for many years.

Generally fruit trees are self fertile with a few exceptions such as plums, nashis, pears and cherries which require specific pollinators eg a second tree planted in close vicinity to enable them to bear fruit (*pollinate*). Others are self-fertile and will fruit without a partner. The other exception for fruit trees is that some have separate male and female plants, the classic example in New Zealand being kiwifruit. Your local garden centre can guide you on the plants when you purchase.

Planting

Fruit trees can be planted anytime of the year when the plants are available. Selecting the correct site to plant your fruit or berries is vital to its success. The three critical factors that you need to consider prior to planting are:

SOIL All fruit trees and berries do best in well drained soil. If your soil is not ideal, you can add in **Daltons Garden Time™ Compost** to help with drainage of the soil, and you can also raise the height of the fruit tree when planting.

SHELTER Choosing a sheltered site is very important. Always try and select a warm, sheltered sunny position. Fruit trees only flower once a year and in a windy position flowers can be blown off the tree. The end result is the fruit will not set, which means no crops!

SUN Fruit trees and berries need maximum sun for maximum ripening of fruit to enhance the flavour. Choose a site that gets at least six hours of sunshine a day.

PLANTING FRUIT TREES

- 1 Prepare the planting site by digging a hole twice as wide and as deep as the container the tree came in.
- 2 Add generous amounts of **Daltons Premium Garden Mix** or **Daltons Garden Time™ Planting Mix** to the hole and mix in well.
- 3 Improve drainage by creating a mound at the bottom in the middle where the rootball will sit.
- 4 Place the plant in the hole, replace the soil around the rootball and pat it to make it compact and firm.
- 5 The ideal tree position is when it sits in the ground and the base of the stem is slightly higher than ground level. This prevents water pooling around the trunk and causing any rots.
- 6 Stake the tree for extra support if required and apply a generous layer of **Daltons Mulch & Grow** around the top but not touching the trunk of your tree.

PLANTING BERRIES

When you are planting new berry plants, add in **Daltons Premium Garden Mix** or **Garden Time™ Time Planting Mix** to give them the best start.

General Care and Maintenance

A number of fruit tree varieties available have been grown on dwarf root stock, which keeps the trees smaller and more accessible for pruning and collecting fruit, some examples being apples and citrus.

Pip and stone fruit will require the most pruning in your backyard orchard. If these trees are left un-pruned, they can grow very large, making harvesting fruit and caring for your trees more difficult. Aim to keep your fruit trees at a maximum height of 4 metres, and prune to provide maximum exposure to sunlight which ripens the fruit, and air movement, helping deter insects from settling on fruit or leaves. Pruning also ensures there is constant renewal of growth on the tree because branches that are 2-3 years or older should be removed annually.

In general when pruning berry fruit plants, remove the bulk of older wood during the end of the growing season eg April/May and tie up some young leaders (*the very young light green shoots*) which will be your fruiting canes in the second year. Canes older than two years usually produce little or no raspberries, and if the cane is even older and has not been pruned for a few years then this can also affect fruiting. When it comes to pruning your berry plants it's best to cut back the canes to ground level at the end of the growing season.

Growing in Containers

If you are short on space and looking to plant fruit trees in a container, citrus are a great choice. In particular, Meyer Lemon, Clementine or Encore Mandarin and Bearrs Lime all have a small compact form. Red guava also grows very well in a container, as does and dwarf Feijoa Bambina. Plant using **Daltons Garden Time™ Potting Mix**. Be sure to water your container fruit frequently as they will easily dry out, especially during summer.

Feeding and Watering

When applying fertiliser, follow the quantities on the packet and make sure it is applied out to the tree drip line, and watered in well. For strong vigorous trees, apply **Daltons Garden Time™ Berry Fertiliser** or **Daltons Garden Time™ Fruit & Citrus Fertiliser** in early spring when plants are coming into growth. Then feed at six weekly intervals until mid December, recommencing in mid February and feeding through till autumn.

Give your fruit trees a deep watering two to three times a week during the growing season which is around mid to late October till April/May. Regularly water your tree throughout the summer months and keep a good layer of mulch around the tree to retain moisture, add nutrition and suppress weeds.

For juicy berries come harvest time, feed your berry fruit plants with **Daltons Garden Time™ Fruit & Citrus Fertiliser** or **Daltons Garden Time™ Berry Fertiliser** every 4-6 weeks from late October to Christmas, recommencing late February to mid-April. But be careful not over fertilise as you will produce more vegetative growth at the expense of your fruit.

Pests and Diseases

One of the most frustrating things when cultivating your home grown fruit is when birds get to it before you do, with figs, and grapes being the most popular. If your fruit trees, berry or vine fruit show signs of being eaten by birds cover them with bird netting as fruit it starts to ripen.

The big advantage of growing your fruit in your backyard is that they are home grown and are tree ripened for maximum flavor. Although some fruit may end up with the odd natural mark they will still taste delicious!

Careful cultivation and continual observation is the key to successful home gardening, so check trees and plants regularly to head off any potential problems before they occur. If you have chosen the best plant varieties for your part of New Zealand then you should have minimal problems.

After pruning pip and stone fruit it's a good idea to spray with a copper compound such as Copper Oxychloride. This adds a protective layer and works as a preventative for a variety of fungal diseases.

Gardening Terms Explained

CULTIVATION: planting, raising, improving and harvesting plants.

FROST TENDER: sensitive to frost.

DRIP LINE: directly under the outer circumference of the trees branches.

CROPPING: an amount of fruit on a tree.

ROOT BALL: the roots and soil amassed at the bottom of a plant.

ORNAMENTAL: a tree that does not produce fruit.



Products to try

Daltons Planter Tabs | Daltons Garden Time™ Berry Fertiliser | Daltons Garden Time™ Fruit & Citrus Fertiliser
Daltons Premium Garden Mix | Daltons Garden Time™ Potting Mix | Daltons Garden Time™ Planting Mix
Daltons Garden Time™ Compost | Daltons Mulch & Grow