



## FRUIT TREE CARE

Deciduous fruit trees are sold bare-root during the dormant season and containerized throughout the growing season. Plant bare-root trees as soon as possible after purchase.

Though fruit trees often prosper with only minimal care, paying attention to their needs will reward you with a larger, more flavorful crop.

### **Watering**

Water newly planted trees whenever the top 2 inches of soil are dry. As the plants develop more extensive root systems, you can water less often--but keep in mind that, to produce a juicy crop, all fruit trees must have periodic deep soaking (provided either by rain or by you). Drip systems are well suited to fruit tree culture. Mulching helps conserve moisture.

### **Fertilizing**

It's best to base your fertilizing schedule on the growth of the tree. If it's growing satisfactorily, its nutrient needs are being met. If its performance is subpar, though, apply a high-nitrogen fertilizer in early spring. Continued poor growth after fertilizing may indicate that your soil is deficient in nutrients other than nitrogen; have a professional soil test done, then follow the laboratory's recommendations.

### **Managing pests and diseases**

A number of pests and diseases can afflict fruit trees. On deciduous fruit trees, using a dormant oil spray during winter prevents many pest problems; the oil smothers the pests as well as any overwintering eggs.

Fruit trees need full sun to thrive. Most also must have well-drained soil, though apples, pears, and plums are somewhat more tolerant of less-than-ideal conditions.