

City Fruit provides info about fruit trees at www.cityfruit.org and has trained volunteers who are willing to help with residential fruit trees. Contact info@cityfruit.org

Shiro Plums



Victoria Plums



Desert King Figs



photos by Gail Savina

You'll have good luck growing healthy fruit in Western Washington if you consider the following before you decide what to plant:

Size: How much room do you have? How big will the tree get—and will it fit into your space when it's mature? Will you be able to reach the fruit?

The fruit tree's ultimate size depends on its rootstock and the tree's natural vigor. Tip-bearing fruits—like plums and cherries—are more vigorous than spur-bearing fruits, like apples, and thus need more room.

Rootstock: The rootstock influences how large the tree will grow. Many different rootstocks are available for apples—fewer choices for other fruits. Certain apple rootstocks (M9, B9, Geneva 11) produce fully dwarfed trees, that is, less than 10 ft. Trees on “semi-dwarf” rootstocks can grow to 15' or taller.

Sun and heat requirements: Most fruits need a minimum of six hours of sunshine per day. If you only have a shady place, consider elderberry, evergreen huckleberry, alpine strawberry and some other berries that can thrive in low- or partial-light conditions.

Although we have mild winters in Western Washington, we also have a very short growing season. Choose fruits that ripen earlier rather than later and think twice about fruits that need plenty of heat (peaches, apricots, grapes and figs). Choose varieties adapted to the Pacific Northwest. For apples and pears, look for varieties that ripen between August and early September. If you have more than one variety, you may want to choose one that ripens in October to spread out your harvest.

If you want to grow fruits that prefer warmer climates, such as peaches, apricots, grapes and figs, look for a warm microclimate, e.g., a south-facing wall that acts as a heat sink or an especially sunny location in your yard.

Pollination: Some fruits are self-pollinating; others require another variety nearby. If you have neighbors with the same species, their plants may pollinate yours. Otherwise, you may need to plant two trees, graft two varieties onto one rootstock, or choose a self-pollinating variety.

Pest- and disease-resistance: Choose varieties that are resistant to the most troublesome pests and diseases. In the Pacific Northwest, wet weather promotes scab; look for scab-resistant apples and pears. Apple maggot fly and codling moth create worm damage in pears and apples. Early-ripening varieties may have fewer worms.

Taste and uses: Some fruit varieties are best eaten fresh; others are best pies or preserves. Consider how you will use the fruit and find a variety that fits your intended use. Also, consider growing a variety that is harder to find in the market, so that you can have access to more diverse fruits.

Asian Pear Tip:

Russet fruits attract fewer pests.

Shinseiki Pears



Frost Peach



Resources

Western Washington Fruit Research Foundation's "Favorite Tree Fruits for the Puget Sound" and other resources can be found at www.wwfrf.org

WSU Extension Service's "Tree Fruit and Alternative Fruits for Western Washington" at <http://maritimefruit.wsu.edu>

Seattle Tree Fruit Society
www.seattletreefruitsociety.com

Norton, Robt. and Jacqueline King. *Apple Cultivars for Puget Sound.* Washington State University Extension, Publishing & Printing. www.pubs.wsu.edu or call 800-723-1763.

Specific Recommendations

Apples

William's Pride: easy to grow, scab resistant. Ripens in early August.

Liberty: easy to grow, very scab resistant, prolific producer, good taste. Ripens in October and keeps until January.

Other easy to grow, versatile apples: **Akane**, **Honey Crisp**, **Jonagold**, **Karmijn de Sonnaville**, and **Spartan**.

A good pairing: **Liberty** and **William's Pride** flower around the same time and pollinize each other, but they ripen at different times—one early and one late. They are easy to grow and scab resistant. Together, they would be good choices for your first two varieties.

Asian Pears

Chojuro (russet tan skin); **Shinseiki** and **Hamese** (both have yellow skin)

European Fall Pears pick Aug-Sept, stores 4-6 weeks

Red Clapp's Favorite: red-skinned, productive, light, sweet flavor

Orcas: large, good for canning, drying, eating, sweet flavor, scab resistant

Also: **Rescue** (good for canning) and **Bartlett** (but susceptible to scab)

European Winter Pears pick Sept-Oct, stores 3-4 months

Seckel: classic American variety; sweet, rich flavor; small size, shorter storage

Cornice: old French variety; dessert pear—sweet, very juicy. Stores well.

Also: **Conference** and **Bosc** (russet, late keeper)

Plums (or prunes)

Japanese types, known as plums, have a cling stone and aren't suitable for drying or canning. They include: **Shiro** (yellow skin and flesh); **Methley** (dark red skin); and **Beauty** (red skin and yellow flesh).

European varieties, also called prunes, have firmer flesh and free stones, so they can be dried. These include: **Stanley**, **Seneca**, and **Victoria**. All are blue or purple with yellow flesh.

Peaches

The **Frost** peach ripens in Western Washington but is susceptible to disease.

Grapes

Candice, **Himrod**, and **Interlaken**.

Figs

Brown Turkey and **Desert King**.