

ESTABLISH APPLE TREES

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In The Home Garden

Horticultural Branch, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture

Before apple trees are selected for planting in the home garden, the following questions should be considered:

- 1.** Why do you want to plant apple trees? Are the trees required primarily for shade and ornamental purposes? If so, one should not overlook the fact that there is a great selection of ornamental trees and shrubs that will prove more effective and much less troublesome than apple trees.
- 2.** Is the climate of the area suited for apple growing? In districts where winter temperatures frequently drop to -15°F , where severe frosts occur in May, or other adverse weather conditions are a likelihood, the chances of successful apple production are slim. If apple trees are to be planted in areas where severe winter conditions are experienced, only the most winter-hardy varieties and rootstocks should be selected.
- 3.** What are the major pests and diseases of apple in the area? In some of the warmer, drier sections of the Province, such as the Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys, control of pests such as the codling moth can be most difficult for the home gardener. In wetter areas control of apple scab can be a major problem. Cost of controlling pests and diseases can exceed the value of fruit produced.

Important Notice - In the major tree-fruit producing areas of British Columbia, pest control by-laws require the owners of fruit trees to provide adequate control of pests and diseases on their trees. Consequently anyone planting a fruit tree in those areas must have suitable spray equipment or be prepared to employ a custom spray operator to do the job.

Planting Site. Sites that are subject to late spring frosts, flooding, or seepage water should be avoided.

Soil Requirements.

Although a deep loam soil with good drainage is preferred, apple trees can be grown successfully on a wide range of soil types. A soil pH of 6.0 to 7.5 is desirable, but readings as low as pH 5.0 and as high as pH 8.0 do not prohibit the growing of apple trees.

Varieties. Apple Series No. 1, a sheet dealing with apple varieties and rootstocks for the home gardener, contains a list of varieties recommended for planting in British Columbia. If garden space limits the number of trees and if additional apple varieties are desired, topworking (budding or grafting) could be employed. By that means a tree consisting of two or more varieties can be developed.

Pollination. Cross pollination can have a very significant effect upon productivity of most apple varieties. To provide for

cross-pollination it is necessary to have two or more varieties. Special attention must be paid to the pollination requirements of self-unfruitful varieties such as Red Delicious, McIntosh, Spartan and Winesap. With the exception of the pollen-sterile varieties Winesap, Stayman and Gravenstein, most varieties grown in the Province are good pollinators.



Selection of Nursery Stock. For best results select 1-year-old whips with good root systems. They are easier to handle, will usually develop more quickly, and are less costly to buy.

Handling Nursery Stock. Pre-planting care of nursery stock can have a great influence upon the performance of trees after they are planted. The trees should be protected from excessively low or high temperatures and the roots should not be allowed to freeze or become dry. If they are to be held for more than just a few days before planting, the bundles should be opened and the trees heeled-in and given a good watering. Trees that show signs of desiccation should have their roots placed in clean water and allowed to soak for 12 hours before being planted. If the trees are delivered by public carrier they should be inspected at time of delivery. If any damage is evident, that should be noted on the carrier's waybill and the nursery advised accordingly.

Planting Distances. Spacing of the trees should be governed by such factors as soil type, rootstocks used, and tree training method to be employed. Planting distances in the tree rows will range from not less than 25 feet with seedling rootstocks to approximately 8 feet with the dwarfing M9 rootstocks. Spacing between rows should range from not less than 25 feet for trees on the vigorous seedling roots to approximately 12 feet for trees on the dwarfing M9 roots.

Planting. Apple trees may be planted in the fall or early spring. Spring planting should be completed before the trees break dormancy. For best results the soil should be moist at planting time.

It is important that planting holes be large enough to accommodate the roots when placed in a natural position. All dead, injured, or excessively long roots should be trimmed off.

Trees on seedling roots can be planted 2 or 3 inches deeper than they stood in the nursery. **For trees on growth-controlling rootstocks, such as M9 or M26, it is essential that the bud union remain 2 to 3 inches above the permanent soil level!**

After a tree is placed in position in the hole and the roots covered with top soil, the soil should be tramped firmly around the roots. Before the hole is completely filled with the remaining soil it should be filled with water. To get the trees off to a good start it is essential that soil moisture be maintained.

Pruning. After planting has been completed and before growth starts in the spring, it is a general practice to cut back all trees to a height of approximately 30 inches. All side branches should be trimmed off.

Fertilizer Application. Where considered necessary, a nitrogenous fertilizer may be applied to stimulate growth of newly planted trees. Spread not more than 12 ounces of ammonium nitrate (34-0-0) lightly and evenly over the surface of the soil within an area extending from the trunk of the tree to a distance of 12 to 16 inches.

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