

APRICOTS

APRICOTS In The Home Garden

Horticultural Branch,
B.C. Ministry of Agriculture

Apricots are July fruits, ripening between cherries and peaches. They are not as juicy as peaches but as a rule are of higher quality. Richer than other tree fruits in vitamins A and C, apricots may be eaten as fresh fruit or they may be canned, processed into pie-filling, stewed, candied, dried or juiced. Apricot juice blended with apple juice makes a very attractive juice product.

PLANTING SITE. Can be grown in British Columbia where peaches will grow; not as hardy as apples. It is advisable to plant in spots where spring frosts are rare. Soils should be strong and well-drained. Apricots do not like "wet feet."

VARIETIES. Moorpark: Large, soft Apricot for fresh eating or drying. Ripens at the beginning of August.
Tilton: Good, all purpose Apricot for canning, drying and fresh eating. Ripens at the end of July.
Skaha: Large, all purpose Apricot, ripening at the end of July.

For canning, Tilton is by far the best, even though it matures some three weeks later than Riland.

POLLINATION. Most varieties of Apricot sold in B.C. are self-fertile. Pollination for Apricots is not a cause for concern.

PLANTING DISTANCES. Apricot trees are generally larger than peach trees, so an area with a minimum diameter of 25 feet should be allowed.

PLANTING. Always select one-year-old trees — they will become established more quickly than older ones. Planting is usually done in early spring. As soon as the tree is planted, cut it back to a height of 30 inches.

TRAINING AND PRUNING. In the first 2 to 3 years after planting, select 3 or 4 main branches which form wide-angled crotches with the trunk. These branches should be spaced equally around the trunk and 6 to 8 inches apart along the trunk. Do not prune heavily at this time or head back, unless a limb is growing stronger than others.

Pruning for the next 4 to 6 years consists of thinning out where branches tend to overcrowd, and the removal of branches that cross or are growing into the centre of the tree.

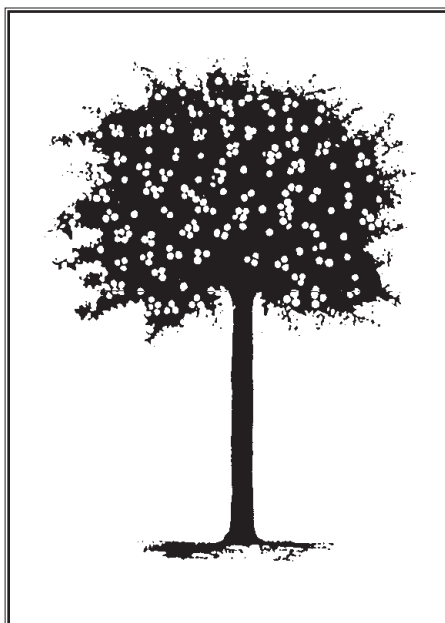
In later years it may be necessary to cut or head back limbs in order to encourage more growth in the lower parts of the tree. Always cut back to a lateral or side-growing branch.

FERTILIZERS (NITROGEN, PHOSPHORUS, POTASSIUM). For the type to use consult the current fertilizer recommendations at your local Knapp's store. The general rule is to apply sufficient nitrogen to maintain each year about 15 inches of new shoot growth when growing at an angle between 30 and 60 degrees.

OTHER ELEMENTS. Deficiencies of other elements may occur. In the Okanagan, for example, regular applications of boron, zinc and magnesium are required — consult the publication "Mineral Deficiencies and Other Disorders of Fruit Trees" issued by the British Columbia Department of Agriculture.

THINNING. If the tree sets a heavy crop and nothing is done, the fruit may not attain desirable sizes. Thus the removal of part of the crop is necessary. To do this, space the fruits about 1½ to 2 inches apart.

BIENNIAL BEARING. Some varieties of apricot trees are prone to bear a crop every other year. When this happens the thinning of blossom buds instead of fruit usually puts the trees back into annual bearing.



PESTS AND DISEASES. The most common pests that attack apricots include aphids, earwigs, fruit tree leaf rollers, peach twig borers, peach tree borers, shot-hole borers, San Jose and lecanium scales. The most common diseases include brown rot and coryneum blight. Most control measures may be found in the publication "Pest Control for the Home Gardener" put out by the B.C. Department of Agriculture.

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HARVESTING

Wenatchee Moorpark: Should have at least 5% pale yellow colour

Tilton: When 100% pale, yellow colour is reached.

Contrary to the opinion of many people, completely tree-ripened apricots are not as good in quality as apricots picked at the above stages and allowed to become fully ripe before using.

For additional information contact your nearest office of the British Columbia Department of Agriculture or Mr. M.P.D. Trumpour, British Columbia Department of Agriculture, Penticton, B.C.

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