

# THE Natural GARDENER

## Apples

Apples are traditionally a northern crop, but can be fruitful here. Although southern apples have little red color, their flavor is excellent. They are only partially self-fertile on their own, so plant two different varieties to get more and better fruit. Space your trees at least 20 feet apart. Apple trees must mature about 4-6 years before producing fruit. Consult our handout, *Planting and Maintenance Guide for Fruits, Nuts, & Berries*, for more information.

Apples should be pruned according to the central leader or modified central leader system. See more detailed pruning information and diagrams at:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/homefruit/apple/apple.html>

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1401.html>

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/ag29.html#central>

**At Planting:** Cut the tall, central stem back to be only 24" – 30" tall and remove all side branches.



**First Growing Season:** Begin training when new growth reaches 3" – 6". Keep one dominant vertical shoot to become the central leader. Choose about 4 uniformly spaced laterals for the first scaffold whorl, and remove all other lateral branches. Begin training laterals to have wide crotch angles. Clip a clothespin on the main trunk just above each branch, so that the clothespin forces the branch to point out, not up. Aim for 60° angles. Remove clothespins at the end of each season.

**1<sup>st</sup> Winter:** Cut back the leader leaving 18" – 24" of new growth. Cut back each lateral so the ultimate shape is like that of a Christmas tree. Remove shoots with narrow branching angles.

**Subsequent Seasons:** Aim to develop whorls consisting of 4 scaffold branches each that are 18 – 24" apart on the main trunk. As branches grow larger, clothespins will need to be replaced with wooden limb spreaders with notches on ends.

For the health of the tree and better quality fruit, thin the fruit to about 6" apart when apples are about the size of marbles. Be careful not to damage the spurs (the short branches) that produce the flower buds and fruit. Apples harvested early continue to ripen in storage. Ideal storage is at a temperature above freezing and below 50° (the refrigerator).

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**Apple Varieties for Central Texas (chilling hours)** Fruit size; Ripening time; Fruit quality and flavor; Skin color; Use; Other qualities and information

**Anna (300)** Medium; Early to mid-June; Crisp, sweet to semi-tart flavor; Light green-yellowish skin with red blush; A good choice for fresh eating and cooking; Heavy producer; Produces at an early age; Pollinate with Dorsett; From Israel.

**Dorsett Golden (250)** Medium to large fruit; Early to mid-June; Firm, smooth, crisp flesh with sweet-tart flavor; Yellow skin with slight pink blush; Pollinates Anna and Ein Shemer; From the Bahamas.

**Ein Shemer (400 – 450)** Large; Mid-June to early July; Crisp, tart, good quality flesh; Yellow skin; Bears young and very productive; A more self-fertile tree than others; Pollinate with Dorsett; From Israel

**Fuji (400 – 600)** Medium; Early to mid-September; Very sweet, crispy, juicy white flesh; Yellow skin with pink-red speckling – redder with sunlight and cooler temperatures; Stores well; Pollinates Mollie's Delicious; From Japan.

**Gala (600)** Small to medium; Late July to early August; Flesh is firm, crisp, sweet, and juicy with excellent flavor; Golden yellow skin with orange to red blush; Stores well; Pollinate with Granny Smith; From New Zealand.

**Granny Smith (500 – 600)** Medium to large; Late September to early October; Juicy, firm, very tart flesh – gets sweeter in storage; Bright green skin; Good for eating fresh or cooking; Vigorous and productive; Tough skin; Stores well; The model for the Beatles "Apple Records;" Pollinates Gala and Mollie's Delicious; From Australia.

**Mollie's Delicious (400 – 500)** Very large; Early to mid-August; High quality flavorful flesh; Light yellow skin with red blush; Vigorous, productive tree; Stores for 10 weeks in fridge; Bears young; Pollinate with Granny Smith or Fuji.

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