



Planting & Maintenance Guide for Fruits, Nuts, & Berries

Fruits, nuts, and berries need tender loving care to thrive and produce fruit in Central Texas. Following these basic guidelines for soil preparation and maintenance can lead to success. Choose a location in full sun where the soil has good surface and internal drainage. Give each plant proper spacing to minimize diseases and maximize production.

Dewberries, Figs, Jujubes, Olives, Pecans, Persimmons, and Pomegranates may be planted without amending the soil. However, most of these plants would perform better in amended soil, as described below. Pecans should **only** be planted where there is at least 3 feet of soil. Follow the mulching, watering, and fertilizing guidelines as described below.

For Apples, Apricots, Blackberries, Grapes, Peaches, Pears, Plums, and Raspberries it is essential to amend the soil to a depth of at least 18 inches and a width of at least 3 feet for each plant. If you have deep soil, mix **Lady Bug Revitalizer** or **All-American Turkey Compost** into the native soil. The resulting soil blend should be 40% - 50% compost. If you have shallow soil, mix in **Lady Bug Hill Country Garden Soil** or **Rose Magic Soil** with the native soil and create a raised bed. The larger you make the amended area, the better. Along with compost or soil, you can mix in a mineral supplement, such as **Lady Bug Glittering Greensand**.

Chilling Hours are the number of hours between 32° and 45° F that a fruiting plant must receive before it can bloom successfully & produce fruit. Different varieties of apples, apricots, peaches, pears, and plums have different chilling hour requirements. The Austin area averages 600 – 800 chilling hours. Downtown Austin receives fewer chilling hours; the Hill Country receives more. Ask our nursery staff on choosing the proper variety of these fruits for your area.

To plant, amend the soil as described above. Dig the hole big enough to accommodate the entire root system without crowding. For bare root trees, build a small hill in the center of the hole so that the tree can sit on top and the roots can spread out along the sides of the hill. Backfill the hole with the amended soil. Do not cover up the first root coming out of the trunk – this should be slightly above the soil line. The graft should be well above ground level and facing the prevailing wind. (In our area the prevailing wind comes from the southeast). Tamp the soil gently & firmly.

Add **Lady Bug Sylvan Formula mulch** over the root zone of all fruit and nut trees and berries. Maintain a layer at least three inches thick – starting a few inches away from the trunk and extending beyond the dripline.

Water the entire root zone and beyond thoroughly right after planting. Follow with a solution of **Maxicrop Seaweed** or **Lady Bug John's Recipe**. Avoid letting trees dry out completely, especially the first two years. Water deeply during the winter only enough to prevent the soil from drying out completely. Water deeply during the growing season about once every week or two, depending on weather and soil. Pay close attention to watering while trees are developing fruit and in late summer when the trees set their flower buds for the next spring.

Fertilize every spring thereafter (about April) with **Lady Bug 8-2-4** or **Lady Bug Garden Pep Cottonseed Meal** over the entire root zone. Add another light application again in the fall (late October).

Prevent overwintering pests and disease by removing any dropped fruit. Remove leaf litter in the fall.

Beneficial Nematodes applied to the soil every fall is very helpful in preventing the plum curculio pest on stone fruits. Please see our handout on *Controlling Plum Curculio* for more information.

Fruit Tree Spray Schedule for Apples, Apricots, Peaches, Pears, and Plums

1. At leaf drop in the fall: Spray **Sulfur** (Safer's Garden Fungicide or HiYield Dusting Wettable Sulfur), **Actinovate**, or **Serenade** to help prevent diseases.
2. During winter dormancy: Spray **Dormant Oil** once. Or spray **Organocide** or **All-Seasons** once a week for 2–3 wks.
3. At bud swell in late winter/early spring: Spray a fungicide as listed in #1 above.
4. Late winter is the time to control the Plum Curculio, which causes “the worm” in the fruit of plums, peaches, and sometimes apples. At Petal-Fall (5 days after bloom), and again at Shuck Split (14 days after bloom), spray an organic insecticide. Petal-Fall is when 75% of the flower petals have fallen. Shuck split happens after the fruit has just barely formed and has just expanded enough to split its papery covering (the “shuck”). Repeat in 10 – 14 days for a total of 3 sprays. Use **Kaolin Clay** or **Eco-Smart Organic Insect Killer Spray for Lawns And Landscapes**. See our handout on *Plum Curculio* for more information.
5. Throughout the growing season, spray leaves once or twice a month with **Lady Bug John's Recipe** or **Maxicrop Seaweed**. In addition, spray our **Aerobically-brewed Compost Tea** regularly for overall health, disease prevention, and disease control.