

## *Pears*

Pears are a good, well-adapted fruit tree to grow here in the Southwest. A pair of pears, of two different varieties, is needed to produce adequate fruit. These trees take between 7 – 9 years to reach full production. Pear trees are tolerant of both heat and drought, and are more tolerant of less than ideal conditions than many other fruit trees. However, better soil preparation and tree care equals better production! Consult our handout *Planting & Maintenance Guide for Fruits, Nuts, & Berries* for complete instructions. Minimize the use of compost and fertilizer on pears, however. High fertility promotes rapid, succulent growth, which promotes fire blight. See our handout on *Fire Blight*.

Pears can be pruned according to the multiple leader system (or central leader or modified central leader). See more detailed pruning information and diagrams at: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/fruit/pear/pear.html>

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

**First Summer:** Choose 3 topmost shoots to be the leaders. They should have wide branching angles, be on opposite sides of the stem, and be *about* 24, 20, and 16 inches above the ground. Keep 3 or 4 evenly-spaced branches below these leaders, also. When the leaders are about a foot long, cut off all other branches except for the leaders and the 3-4 branches.

**1<sup>st</sup> Winter:** Cut back the leaders to 18 – 24.” Always remove shoots with narrow branching angles.

**Subsequent Winters:** Cut back the leaders leaving 20 – 30” of new growth. Remove crossing branches and branches from the interior of the tree to allow more light penetration. Never remove more than 1/3 of the canopy at a time.

For better fruit and the health of the tree, the fruit must be thinned when pears are about the size of marbles. Leave one pear per cluster, and space the clusters approximately every six inches. Be careful not to damage the spurs (the short branches) that produce the flower buds and fruit. Pears (except Asian) do not ripen well on the tree. Harvest maturity is indicated with a slight change from green to yellow. Pears ripen in 2 – 3 weeks at room temperature in a ventilated area.

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

Note: The familiar European varieties of pear such as Bosc, D’Anjou, and Bartlett are not grown here because of their extreme susceptibility to Fire Blight. All of our pears are Oriental Hybrid varieties, except where noted: **(Asian)**.

**Ayres (450)** Medium; August; Juicy, sweet flesh; Yellow skin with brown russet and red blush; Good for fresh eating and canning; Highly resistant to fire blight; From Tennessee Agriculture Experiment Station, 1954.

**Chojuro (Asian)(500)** Medium; Early to mid-August; Firm, mildly sweet, crisp, white flesh; Greenish-brown to russet brown skin; Highly productive; Pick when first yellow-brown to avoid bruising; Good fall color.

**Kieffer (400)** – Large; Late September – October; Flesh crisp, juicy, white with coarse, gritty texture; Greenish-yellow skin; Stores well; Good for cooking and canning; Some like the texture of fresh fruit; To reduce grit for fresh eating, store fruit in a paper bag 2 – 4 weeks at room temperature; A consistent, heavy bearer; Highly resistant to fire blight; From Rosborough, Pennsylvania, 1863.

**Leconte (200)** – Medium; August – early September; Attractive, juicy, aromatic, bell-shaped fruit; Bright yellow skin with red blush; Good fresh eating; Fair fire blight resistance.

**Moonglow (500)** – Large; August – September; Flesh soft, moderately juicy, gritless; Skin brownish-green; Mild flavor, sub-acid; Good fresh and processed; Good fire blight resistance; Excellent pollinator; Bears early.

**Orient (400)** – Medium-large; August – September; Slightly sweet, firm, juicy, white flesh; Yellow, russeted skin; Heavy producer; Fair fresh eating; Good canning & baking; Highly resistant to Fire Blight.

**Shinko (Asian) (450)** – Medium-large; Mid-August to mid-September; Flesh fine-textured with excellent, rich, sweet flavor; Brownish-green russeted skin; Very good fire blight resistance.

**Shinseiki (Asian) (350-450)** – Medium; Early – mid July; Good to excellent flavor; Yellow skin with brown freckling; Good fresh eating; Moderate fire blight resistance.

**Warren (600-800)** – Small-medium; August; Excellent, smooth, buttery textured flesh; Red-blushed skin; Slow to bear fruit; Resistant to fire blight; Discovered in Hattisburg, Mississippi by T. O. Warren.