



## FRUIT TREES FOR YOLO COUNTY

### TASTE

Probably the most important consideration in selecting a fruit tree is picking a species and variety that you (and your neighbors) enjoy eating. This might mean choosing a common variety or selecting one that is not normally available in grocery stores. Nursery catalogs often provide taste descriptions, and some nurseries conduct fruit tastings during the harvest season. A good way to become acquainted with some of the more uncommon varieties is to visit local farmers markets to taste and discuss varieties with the growers.

### POLLINATION

When selecting a tree at the nursery, be sure to check out its pollination requirements:

*Self-fertile* – These fruit trees do not need another variety to accomplish pollination. If the variety is self-fertile, it sets a good fruit crop when pollinated by flowers on the same tree. Flowers of nectarines, peaches, some American plums, sour cherries, and most apricots are self-fertile.

*Self-sterile* – These fruit trees, such as sweet cherries, some apples, Japanese plum varieties, a few apricots, and many pears require cross-pollination from another variety.

*Partially self-fertile* – Some trees set some fruit when pollinated by other flowers on the same tree, but yield a better crop if they are pollinated by a different variety; thus, two different varieties should be chosen for maximum fruit yield and quality. Many plums and some apples fall into this category

### HARVEST TIME

If you are planting more than one variety of the same fruit species, you might consider extending your harvest by selecting varieties that ripen earlier or later in the season. Different varieties of apricots, for example, ripen from early May to August, and apples from June through early November. Also consider planting different fruit species to expand the harvest season; e.g. apricots for June, peaches for July, apples for September, etc.

### TREE SIZE

You should first decide how you intend the tree to fit into your home landscape. Tree size can be controlled by selecting appropriate species and rootstocks, and also by learning and adopting pruning practices that maintain the desired tree size. Fruit trees in a backyard orchard require annual pruning to maintain tree size and allow light to reach developing fruit and next year's buds. The height should not exceed 12 to 14 feet for ideal easy harvesting, but for standard trees the size can be increased if shade is also desirable. Standard size trees need space so they should be planted at least 15 to 20 feet apart.

Numerous varieties of genetic semi-dwarf trees are available for many fruit species. With proper pruning, these trees can be kept to a height of 10 feet. These are usually varieties that are grafted onto a dwarfing rootstock. True genetic dwarfs usually attain a permanent height of 3 to 8 feet. However, to maintain long term high quality fruit production, the lower-vigor dwarf trees may require more care, such as frequent irrigation, careful pruning, and more attentive fertilizing.

## **SOIL**

Because much of Yolo County has heavy clay soils which hold water for longer periods than coarser soils, it is wise to select rootstocks which can withstand “wet feet”. Colt rootstock for cherries and Citation for apricot, peach, nectarine are more suitable for heavy clay soils. Lovell Peach rootstock for peaches and nectarines also tolerates wet winter soils. Marianna (M2624) is the best choice for plum trees in these conditions.

## **CLIMATE**

*Winter Chill* - To achieve optimum spring bloom, flower buds on fruit trees must be exposed to a certain amount of winter chilling during their dormant period. This chilling requirement is measured as the accumulated number of hours below 45° F, and in most of Yolo County you can expect a minimum of about 800 hours of winter chill. The chilling requirement varies widely depending on the type and variety of fruit. Some apples, such as McIntosh and Rome Beauty, require more than 800 hours of winter chill.

*Summer Heat* - Some apricot varieties have difficulty with summer heat. Royal and Blenheim do not like temperatures above 100° F at harvest. Patterson has been found to be a better performer in heat.

## **VARIETIES**

**APPLES** Red Astrachan, Gravenstein, White Astrachan, Golden Delicious, Gala and Granny Smith all need pollinators. The Gravenstein is in itself a poor pollinator; thus, when planted, it requires two other varieties for all to produce. Gala and Granny Smith are late harvest. Note: Consider only rootstocks East Malling IX (EMIX), Malling 26 (M26), and Malling Merton 106 (MM106)

**APRICOTS** Royal or Blenheim do not like temperatures above 100° F at harvest. Patterson doesn't pit burn from hot temperatures at harvest like Royal does. Flora Gold, a genetic dwarf, will still grow to 10-12 feet. Tilton is good for hot summers but needs 1000 hours of below 45° F in the winter. Note: Many apricots are self-fertile. Plums and peaches can be grafted onto limbs to produce several fruits on the same tree.

**CHERRIES** Black Tartarian or Larian are early bearing (any sweet cherry will pollinate these). Bing will harvest mid-season (use Sam, Van, or Black Tartarian as pollinator). Stella is self-pollinating and late harvest. Garden Bing, a mid-season, genetic dwarf, is self-fertile, and will grow to 8 feet in the ground (can be kept to a few feet in a container). Note: All sweet cherries but Stella and Garden Bing require cross-pollination. Bing, Lambert and Royal Ann will not pollinate each other. Sour cherries are self-fertile; Montmorency is a good choice for our area but may be susceptible to canker if planted in heavy wet soil.

**NECTARINES** Independence is early season, Flavortop and Fantasia are mid-season, and Flamekist and Fairlane are late season nectarines. All do well here even in low chilling years. Genetic dwarf nectarines Nectarina, Garden Beauty, Garden Delight and Garden King are good choices for this area.

**PEACHES** Flavorcrest and Springcrest are both early season semi-freestone peaches. Suncrest and July Elberta ripen midseason. Fay Elberta and O'Henry are large freestone peaches that ripen late season. Genetic dwarfs Bonanza, Empress, and Garden Gold will grow in this area. Note: Totally satisfactory dwarfing rootstock for peaches has yet to be found although there are true genetic dwarf varieties available. All peaches do best with cold winters, warm dry springs, and hot summers.

**PEARS** Moonglow harvests in early season and resists fireblight. Magness will harvest midseason, highly resists fireblight, and does not pollinate any other varieties. Kieffer is fireblight resistant, but the flesh is gritty, and so is not good to eat fresh. It needs low winter chill and will grow well in our heat. Bartlett and Comice have excellent fruit but are fireblight susceptible. California has excellent flavor, and is semi resistant to fireblight; however, the fruit can be variable in shape. Note: Most pears need pollinators. Magness does not pollinate anything. Bartlett and California will set without cross-pollination.

**PLUMS** Santa Rosa is a self-fruitful, low chill plum that ripens early. July Santa Rosa or Laroda ripen early midseason (for Laroda, use Santa Rosa or Late Santa Rosa as pollinator). Late Santa Rosa and Queen Ann ripen late mid season. Cassleman is a self-fertile, late season plum.

**References:**

*"Fruit Trees for Yolo County"*. Treva Valentine, University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Cooperative Extension, Yolo County, 2001

The Home Orchard: Growing Your Own Fruit and Nut Trees. Chuck A. Ingels, Pamela M. Geisel, and Maxwell V. Norton, Technical Editors, University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Publication 3485, 2007

California Master Gardener Handbook. Dennis R. Pittinger, Ed., University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Publication 3382, 2002.

**Web sites:**

<http://ceyolo.ucdavis.edu/publications.htm>

Numerous free publications on Yolo County gardening.

<http://homeorchard.ucdavis.edu/>

Tree selection, planting, irrigation, pruning, thinning, training, etc.

<http://www.davewilson.com/homegrown>

Fruit tree catalog, high density plantings, tree selection, etc.

<http://www.farmerfred.com/>

Local gardening information.

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