



Urban Harvest

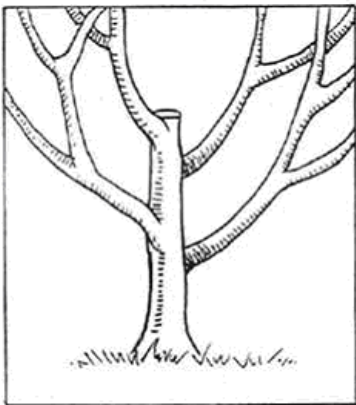
Growing gardens. Enriching lives.

Apples

Apples are grown on dwarfing rootstock, so they will be about 6' tall and 5' in diameter. They like full sun and need adequate drainage; the roots cannot sit in standing water. Some varieties need a pollinator to produce fruit. Apple trees lose their leaves in the winter, and should easily withstand freezes.

Care of Apple Trees

Planting: Plant during the winter when you purchase the tree (January to early July). Plant in full sun with good drainage. Dig a hole that is wide and deep enough to accommodate the root system. Spread the roots out. The graft, where the tree was grafted onto a hardy disease resistant variety, should be a couple of inches above the soil when you finish planting. Use existing soil only – no amendments. Water in well, and water every day for a few days unless it rains.



Pruning: Apple trees need to be pruned to get sunlight onto all branches. Thus it is important to develop a modified central-leader scaffold well spaced around the trunk horizontally and vertically with upward-sloping limbs 45° to 60° from horizontal. This builds a strong infrastructure for holding the fruit and helps give sunlight access to lower limbs. Removing crossing branches or preventing them will get sun to the branches too. In addition, removing or heading back interior branches that go up vertically from the scaffold will increase light penetration. Finally, trees (not bushes) will produce little if any fruit on branches growing downward. These downward hangers should be removed.

Production: Apples will begin to produce in year three or four. If there is fruit before year three, pick it off immediately in order to allow all energy go into root production and growth. Apples will form clusters of fruit. If you prune each cluster to one or two fruit, you will have larger and tastier fruit.

Watering: Like all fruit, make sure apples get consistent water in the first few years. Watering can come from rain or a hose. During the first year, provide the tree with about 7 gallons of water per week, preferably once a week and water slowly. This will be a little more than 3 minutes with a ½" hose and 1 ½ minutes with a 5/8" hose. Remember to account for rainfall when determining how much to water with a hose.

Fertilization: February (1st year – 1.5 cups of cottonseed meal or ½ cup of balanced organic fertilizer; 2nd year – 3 cups of cottonseed meal; 3rd year – 6 cups of cottonseed meal; mature tree – 3 to 6 quarts cottonseed meal per inch of trunk at base). May – same as in February.

Harvesting: Taste apples when they look the right size for the variety that you are growing. Just keep tasting until you think they are ready.

Varieties of Apples for the Houston Area Climate

Anna Apple Large crops of large, sweet, crisp, mild flavored fruit that stores 2 months. Self-fruitful, but better production if pollinated by Dorsett Golden. A low-chilling yellow apple with a slight red blush. The fruit ripens in early June, softens fast and should be handled carefully. Optimum harvest is before one third of the peel develops the red blush. Ripens late June. Needs to be pollinated by Dorsett Golden. 200 chill hours.

Carnaval Newest apple for the Gulf Coast, Carnavale is yellow, but with pronounced rosy-red blush overtones. Looks more red than yellow. The fruit is firm, the flesh is crisp and the flavor complex – sweet with a tart overtone. A heavy bearer of uniform rounded fruits. It is early to flower, just slightly later than Anna, with a similar ripening date. Originally from Brazil. Good resistance to fireblight – heat and humidity tolerant. Self-fruitful. 250-300 chill hours.

Dorsett Golden Apple Large, firm, sweet. Golden delicious type. Stores 2 months. Very low chill yellow apple. The fruit has a yellow peel, which develops a slight pink blush. The fruit ripens in June. If picked with a slight blush, the flavor is sweet, fruit is firm and will store several weeks in the refrigerator. The tree has moderate vigor. Bloom period for the Dorsett Golden overlaps with Anna and the two varieties should be planted together for good cross-pollination. Superior performance in heat and humidity – heavy, reliable producer. Ripens mid to late June. 100/200 chill hours. Self-fruitful.

2-in-1 Apple & 3-in-1 Apple These multi-grafted apples have more than one variety grafted onto each rootstock. These specimens are perfect for smaller gardens where a variety of flavors and an extended harvest season is desired. They are also delightfully ornamental when in bloom and can easily be worked into an existing perennial border as well as the orchard. The varieties are labeled on each tree. Care should be taken to preserve each variety when pruning. Prune more vigorous limbs harder to maintain a balanced specimen.