



Urban Harvest Fruit Tree Survival Guide

Basic information to select, plant and care for your fruit tree, shrub or vine

Fruits for the New Fruit Gardener | Varieties Recommended for Container Culture | Chill Hours & Hardiness | Planting Your Fruit Tree

For more information, visit www.urbanharvest.org/gardeningadvice

Fruits for the New Fruit Gardener

If you are new to growing fruits, we recommend **Citrus, Blackberries, and Figs** as your first effort. These fruits are relatively easy to grow in our area and are very productive with minimal effort. They are well adapted to our climate and do not require complicated care and pruning. There is a lot of variety available in these groups, so even your first fruit garden can be diverse and rewarding.

Varieties Recommended for Container Culture

Most fruits can be grown in containers as long as attention is paid to the root environment, nutritional needs, moisture requirements, and pruning. However, some fruits are more suitable for containers, and adapt to that environment without expert level care.

Avocados (up to 5 years of age)

Baby Ginger

Blueberries

Dwarf Mulberry

Goji Berry

Little Ruby Fig

Starfruit

Citrus:

Turmeric

Calamondin

Dwarf Lemons

Dwarf Limes

Kumquats

Mexican (Key) Lime

Any Citrus variety on Flying Dragon

Rootstock

Chill Hours & Hardiness

Chill Hours

Some fruit varieties require a specific number of chill hours (or “chill units”) throughout winter in order to break dormancy, bloom and produce fruit the following spring. A simple explanation of chill hours is that one Chill Hour is one hour of air temperature between 32°F and 45°F. Hours below freezing do not add to the accumulation and hours over 60°F are subtracted from the accumulation. You should know the average Chill Hours expected for your area in a normal winter. You can expect success from trees that are as much as 100 – 150 hours within your chill zone (above or below). For more information, visit:

http://thegardenacademy.com/Chill_Hours.html

<https://yearroundgardening.me/2012/11/07/randall-chill-and-cold-zones-for-southeast-texas/>

Hardiness

The Upper Gulf Coast is a wonderful place to grow fruit because we sit in a band where both temperate and tropical fruits can be grown with a little attention given to their temperature preferences. Citrus, tropical, and semi-tropical fruits can be damaged when the temperatures dip below freezing, but the range of tolerance varies widely. We refer to this as “hardiness”. You will find the average expected hardiness of each affected variety on the signs in each section. You can also find this information in the Fruit Care Sheets on our website at <http://urbanharvest.org/fruits>. After you have planted your fruits, please see our recommendations for winter protection at <http://urbanharvest.org/weather-data>.

Planting Your Fruit Tree

- 1) Keep the root ball moist, but not soggy, until you are ready to plant.
- 2) Choose a well-drained location, fruit trees do not like “wet feet”.
- 3) Most fruit trees prefer full sun. Choose a location with a minimum of 6 – 8 hours of sun.
- 4) Measure the height of the root ball (not the container, but the top of the soil).
- 5) Dig the new hole. The center should be 1” – 2” shallower than height of the root ball, and at least 2x the width. The hole should not have steep sides. It should be a wide “bowl”; shallow at the outer edges, and deepest in the center (but not exceeding the height you measured before).
- 6) After you have dug the hole, set the tree into the center and check for depth. Make sure the top of the root ball will sit 1” – 2” above the native soil line.
- 7) Remove the tree from the nursery container and set it in the center. Check for straightness and your preferred positioning.
- 8) Backfill until ½ of the hole is filled using the soil you removed from the hole. Tamp, but do not pack hard. Do not amend it with compost or fertilizers at this time.
- 9) Water the tree at this halfway point by filling to the top and allowing it to drain completely. This will help drive out air pockets, settle the soil around the roots, and thoroughly saturate the ground under the root ball.
- 10) After the water has drained backfill with the remaining soil. You may use some extra soil to form a “moat” or “tree well” to hold water for the first few months. This is helpful, but not an absolute necessity. After planting, water the hole and allow it to drain several times.
- 11) Apply ½” – 1” of compost followed by mulch. Do not exceed 3” – 4” total coverage after settling (this may mean that you start out with 6” – 12” of mulch to begin with, depending on the material used.) Keep mulch back 3” – 4” from the trunk. The mulch ring should be as wide as possible.
- 12) Do not fertilize until the tree has begun putting on vigorous new growth. This will generally be mid-summer of the first year, but fertilizing can be delayed until the beginning of the second year if desired.

