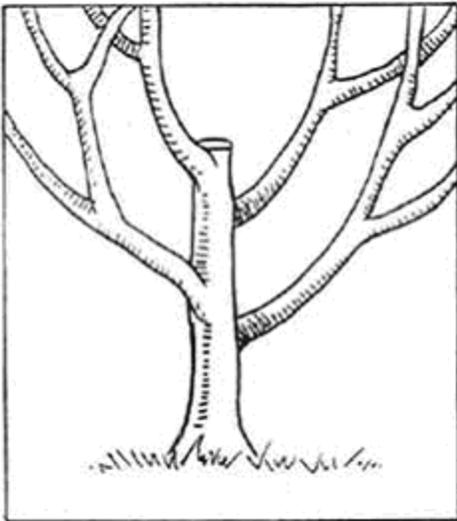


Urban Harvest

Growing gardens. Enriching lives.

## Pears

Pears can be grown anywhere in the Houston area, although they do a lot better the further north you go. They do better in the Woodlands than inside the loop, but all these varieties still work in all parts of the Houston area for their chill hour requirement is met by the amount of cold hours during a usual Houston winter. Pears like full sun or as close to full sun as can be provided. Pears can withstand winter freezes. Pollinators are needed in most cases to produce fruit; however there are some varieties that do not need a pollinator. Pears do not like standing water.



### Care of Pear Trees

**Pruning:** Pear 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  $45^\circ$  to  $60^\circ$  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.

**Space requirements:** Pears can grow to be quite tall and are upright in growth pattern. They should be pruned to keep them to a height where fruit can be picked. Spacing between pears can be as little as 6' to 8' since they mainly have an upright growth pattern.

**Planting:** Plant the bare root trees as soon as you get them home. Plant in the soil that you already have – no amenities. Snip off any dead or damaged roots before planting. Make sure the root system is fully extended when planting. Do not coil or bunch up the roots. If you cannot plant bare root trees immediately, heal them into the soil until you can plant or at least make sure the roots do not dry out. Healing involves burying the roots in the soil and moistening the soil in order to keep the roots alive.

**Production:** Pears can 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.

**Watering:** Like all fruit, make sure pears 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:** (if the tree has rapid growth, cut back on fertilization in order to avoid fire blight). February: 1st year – 1.5 cups of cottonseed meal, 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. In May, fertilize the same as in February.

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

### **Varieties of Pears for the Houston Area Climate**

**Acres Homes Pear** Acres Home is precocious, bearing at about 3 years, like Spaulding. It has a naturally spreading shape. The chill hour requirement is only 300 to 350, which is perfect for metro-Houston. Acres Home occasionally gets some fire blight but it does not seem to descend down the limb, which is good. The Acres Home fruit is very large with a traditional pear shape and with a red blush on the exposed side. It bears heavily every year. Acres Home is the nicest landscape tree. Pollinate with Southern Queen, Southern Bartlett, Meadows and Tennessee. An outstanding pear for the Houston area.

**Meadows Pear** Meadows is a very good quality upright pear with Asian pear crunchiness, somewhat between European and Asian taste. It bears fruit at a young age which is unusual among pears. Because of being upright, it needs to be trained to have its branches at more of an angle. Just right for the Houston area.

**Southern Bartlett** Southern Bartlett has a spreading shape, and bears in about 4-5 years. It is a modestly larger tree than Acres Home, but not as big as Tennessee. Its flowering period is about the same as Acres Homes and Southern Queen, but is slightly higher chill - about 450 hours, which metro-Houston regularly gets. It can get some fire blight, perhaps slightly more than Acres Home, but not enough to get excited about. The fruit size is about 70% of Acres Home. Southern Bartlett seems to be more of an alternate year bearer. An outstanding pear for the Houston area. It can be pollinated with Acres Homes, Tennessee or Southern Queen.

**Southern Queen** Southern Queen bears in about 5-6 years, and worth the wait. It is upright in growth habit and does not grow quite as rapidly as Acres Home. The chill hour requirement is only 300 to 350, which is perfect for metro-Houston. Southern Queen seems totally blight resistant. Southern Queen is russet and all fruit evenly pear shaped, and are slightly smaller than Acres Home fruit. It bears heavily every year. An outstanding pear for the Houston area. Pollinate with Acres Homes, Tennessee or Southern Bartlett.

**Spalding Pear** If you like the crunchy juicy, sweetness of an Asian pear and the mellow complex flavor of a European pear, you will love Spalding. A healthy, vigorous tree produces loads of medium size, round, light green fruit. Bears in 3-4 years. Self-fruitful and fireblight resistant. 350 chill hours.

**Tennessee Pear** Great flavor, great blight resistance, excellent storage. Bears in 5-6 years. Pollinate with Atlas Super Orient, Spalding, Southern Bartlett, Southern Queen or Acres Homes. 400 chill hours.

**Tennousi** Great flavor, great blight resistance, excellent storage. Cross between Tennessee and Hosui. Bears in 5-6 years. Pollinate with Southern Bartlett, Southern Queen or Tennessee. 400 chill hours.

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2311 Canal Street, Suite 200, Houston, Texas 77003, 713.880.5540, [urbanharvest.org](http://urbanharvest.org)