

Urban Harvest  
Gardening for good.

## Apples

Category:	Temperate; deciduous
Hardiness:	Easily withstands freezes
Fruit Family:	Pome fruits
Light:	Full sun
Size:	9'H x 8'W average, may be pruned to desired HxW
Soil:	Well-drained, will not tolerate standing water
Planting:	Plant during dormancy in Jan – Feb

Apples are a favorite fruit that can be eaten fresh, dried, or baked. They are used in baking, canning, and jellies. Apple trees are beautiful in bloom with soft pink flowers followed by soft green foliage. Apple trees will live and produce for decades.



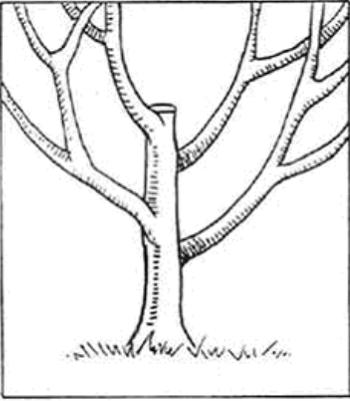
### Care of Apple Trees

**Planting:** Select a planting area that is well-drained or create a raised planting bed. Remove all vegetation within a minimum three-foot diameter circle.

Locate the root flare; the point where the trunk transitions to the roots. Remove any nursery soil above this point, making sure the roots are still covered. Trim any roots that appear to be circling the root ball and any broken or clearly dead roots. Measure the depth of the resulting root ball.

Dig a hole that is wide and deep enough to easily accommodate the root ball. The sides of the hole should be tapered outward, not straight down (visualize a wok, not a stock pot) with the widest point at the top of the hole. The deepest point of the hole should be no deeper than your measurement of the root ball. This will allow the root flare to sit at the soil level and insures that the graft scar (located several inches about the root flare) will always be several inches above the soil level.

Place the root ball in the prepared hole. Check for straightness. Position the lowest branch you have decided to keep facing southwest. Backfill  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the depth with existing soil – no amendments should be added during planting. Water well and allow it to drain. Fill the remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the depth. Tamp the soil, but do not pack hard. Water in well and water every day for a few days unless it rains. A mulch of composted native mulch or rotted leaves is highly recommended. Do not use bark mulch.



**Pruning:** Apple trees need to be pruned to get sunlight onto all branches. It is recommended to develop a modified central-leader scaffold. Scaffold branches should be well spaced around the trunk horizontally and vertically. Limbs should be upward-sloping at an angle of 45° to 60° from horizontal. Limbs with these angles will discourage unproductive upward growth from side branches. This builds a strong infrastructure for holding the fruit and helps give sunlight access to lower limbs. Remove crossing branches and remove or thin interior branches that grow vertically from the scaffold. Trees 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 development and tree growth. Apples will form clusters of fruit. If you thin each cluster to one fruit, you will have larger, tastier fruit and more production in future years.

**Watering:** All fruit trees should get consistent water in the first few years. Watering can come from rain or a hose. During the first year, if the soil under the mulch is dry, provide the tree with about 7 gallons of water per week, preferably once a week. Water slowly. This can 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.

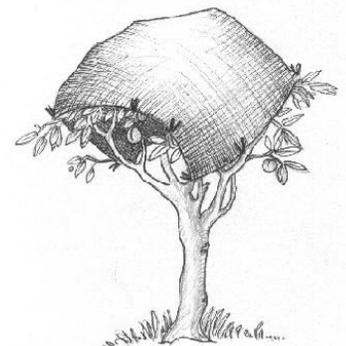
**Fertilizing:** We recommend an organic program for fruit trees in the home landscape. For a small number of trees, use a slow release organic fertilizer, available at local independent nurseries. If you have a large number of trees, or a small number of trees and a limited budget, you can use cottonseed meal, available at nurseries and feed stores. Fertilizers should be broadcast under the entire canopy space of the tree. An organic mulch of compost and native mulch, or well-rotted leaves should be maintained at all times as part of your nutrition program.

Slow release organic fertilizer: 1<sup>st</sup> year – ½ cup; 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> years – 3 pounds; subsequent years - 20 to 40 pounds per 1000 square feet. Apply every 3 – 4 months.

Cottonseed meal: 1<sup>st</sup> year – 1.5 cups; 2<sup>nd</sup> year – 3 cups; 3<sup>rd</sup> year – 6 cups; mature trees – 3 to 6 quarts per inch of trunk measured at the base. Apply in February and May.

**Harvesting:** Taste apples when they look the right size for the variety that you are growing. Just keep tasting until you are pleased with the taste and texture, then harvest all fruits at this stage. Cradle the apple in your hand, lift & twist until it releases. Do not pull the apple from the tree as this may break the fruiting spur. Care should be taken to protect the spurs as they may produce for many years. Apples are typically ripe in May or June in our area.

**Winter Protection:** Winter protection is not necessary for apples. In fact, they need to acquire a specific number of chill hours in order to break dormancy and produce blooms & fruit. If the tree has open blooms in late winter/early spring, and temperatures are predicted to fall below 28° F, you may cover the



tree with a cloth “tent”. It is not necessary to wrap the tree. Just drape the cloth to prevent frost from settling directly on the blossoms. Use clothespins or twine to secure the cloth to the branch tips. Remove immediately after the danger has passed.

## Varieties of Apples for the 2016 Sale

***Anna, Dorsett Golden, Carnavale™, Multi-graft***

### Varieties of Apples for the Houston Area Climate

***Anna Apple:*** A pretty yellow apple with a slight red blush. Large crops of large, sweet, crisp, mild flavored fruit that will store 2 months. The fruit ripens in June, softens quickly, and should be handled carefully. Optimum harvest is before one third of the peel develops the red blush. Self-fruitful, but better production if pollinated by Dorsett Golden or Carnavale™. **200 chill hours.** May bloom too early some years if planted north of FM 1960

***Dorsett Golden Apple:*** Golden Delicious type apple. Fruits have a yellow peel which develops a slight pink blush. Large, firm, sweet fruit that will store 2 months. The fruit ripens mid-June. Flavor and texture are best if picked when the fruit has a slight blush. 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. Self-fruitful. **100 - 200 chill hours.** Dorsett should not be planted north of FM1960.

***Carnavale™:*** A beautiful yellow apple with a large, rosy-red blush. The fruit has firm, crisp flesh and a wonderfully complex flavor – sweet with a tart overtone. Carnavale™ is a heavy bearer of uniform, rounded fruits. It is early to flower, just later than Anna, with a similar ripening date. The tree may reach an average of 12’ unless pruned lower, and has a nice spreading habit. It has its origins in Brazil and should produce in all part of Southeast Texas. Good resistance to fire blight, tolerant of heat and humidity. Self-fruitful. **250 – 300 chill hours.**

***Multi-grafted Apples:*** These trees have more than one suitable, low-chill variety grafted onto a single trunk. These specimens are perfect for smaller gardens where a variety of flavors and an extended harvest season is desired. The varieties are labeled on each tree.