



Urban Harvest
Gardening for good.

Plums

Category:	Temperate; deciduous
Hardiness:	Easily withstands freezes
Fruit Family:	Stone fruit
Light:	Full sun
Size:	15' –25'H x 15'-20'W average, may be pruned to desired HxW
Soil:	Well-drained, will not tolerate standing water
Planting:	Plant during dormancy in Jan – Feb

Gulf Coast plums grace the landscape with beautiful flowers each winter while producing delicious plums in spring that are as good or better than market varieties. Some plums will fruit without a pollinizer plum, but most require a pollinator variety. Self-fruitful plums will produce more fruit with cross-pollination from another variety.

Care of Plum Trees

Planting: Plum trees need to be planted 8' to 10' from the nearest tree. They can be planted closer, but there will be very little room between trees, for the limb spread on plums is about 5' - 6'.

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

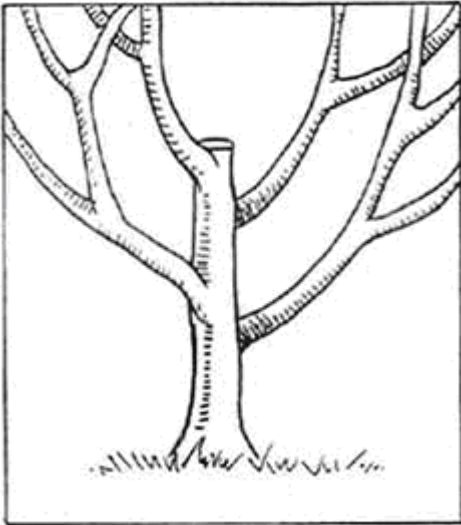
Locate the root flare; the point where the trunk transitions to the roots. Remove any nursery soil above this point, making sure the roots are still covered. Trim any roots that appear to be circling the root ball and any broken or clearly dead roots. Measure the depth of the resulting root ball.

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: Plum trees need to be pruned to get sunlight onto all branches. Develop a modified central-leader scaffold with upward-sloping limbs 45° to 60° from horizontal, well-spaced around the trunk horizontally and vertically. This builds a strong infrastructure for holding the fruit and helps give



sunlight access to lower limbs. Remove crossing branches and remove or head back interior branches that go up vertically from the scaffold to increase light penetration. Fruit trees will produce little if any fruit on branches growing downward. These downward hangers should be removed.

There are two main kinds of plums: Japanese and European. The varieties we sell are Japanese and they fruit on last year's new wood. Therefore, after the spring harvest, look carefully at the branches and thin those that are not producing lots of new wood back to a vigorous side branch.

As your tree gets taller, it may get too tall to pick or prune. To prevent this, thin the leading stalk (the trunk) back to a weak upward angled side branch each winter, and thin all other

branches back to at least a foot below this side branch. Plums may also be pruned to the "open vase" method.

Production: Plums will produce their first fruits in their 2nd or 3rd year from planting. The first crops will be very light, but will increase with maturity. Fruiting is dependent on bee pollination, so cold days in January may reduce fruit set. Thin plums when they are about $\frac{3}{4}$ " diameter, leaving 3" – 4" between fruits.

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 $\frac{1}{2}$ " hose and 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes with a $\frac{5}{8}$ " 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: 1st year – ½ cup; 2nd & 3rd years – 3 pounds; subsequent years - 20 to 40 pounds per 1000 square feet. Apply every 3 – 4 months.

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

Harvest: Plums are picked at different stages depending on use. If used for jellies and preserves, it is best to pick them when they are just barely soft, but still retain some firmness and tartness. If they are to be eaten fresh, they should be allowed to fully ripen on the tree. At this stage they will be very soft and the flesh will be juicy and tender. In all cases, lift and twist the fruit from the tree. You may notice a soft, frosty-looking film on the fruit, which is called the “wax bloom”.

Pests: Plum fruit can be infested with Plum Curculio, but this is less common than for peaches. Check for a small half-moon cut on the fruit, and pull off those fruits and discard them. Most plums for our area are very early producing and will likely avoid Plum Curculio. An organic method to protect from Plum Curculio is to spray with Surround®WP, a non-toxic wettable powder that is sprayed on when the fruit is very small. It coats the fruit and prevents Plum Curculio from getting in. Birds may eat them if they can see them. You may want to net the tree or individual branches with mosquito netting or window screening.

Winter Protection: Winter protection is not necessary for plums. 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 tent to the branch tips. Remove immediately after the danger has passed.



Varieties of Plums for the 2016 Sale

Burgundy, Scarlet Beauty, Multi-graft

Varieties of Plums for Southeast Texas

Beauty: Sweet, flavorful plum that is more widely adapted than Santa Rosa, and more productive in coastal climates. Reddish-purple skin, fully ripe fruit has red flesh. Harvest in late May. Self-fruitful, but will produce more with another variety planted nearby. Excellent pollinizer for Mariposa. **250 chill hours**

Burgundy: Maroon-colored skin and semi-freestone flesh. Sweet, with little or no tartness and a very pleasing, mild flavor. High taste test scores. Prolonged harvest and very productive. Tree has a narrow, upright habit. Self-fruitful. **400 chill hours**

Gulf Beauty: Very early production, larger fruit than Gulf Ruby. Bright red skin, yellow flesh. Outstanding disease resistance. Excellent production over a 4-5 week period. Pollinate with Gulf Blaze or Gulf Ruby. **250 chill hours**

Gulf Blaze: Blooms around March 1st (2 weeks later than Gulf Beauty). Light red skin, yellow flesh. Production is scattered over 5-6 weeks. Excellent disease resistance. Very good fresh eating. Pollinate with Gulf Ruby or Gulf Beauty. **250 chill hours**

Gulf Ruby: Excellent flavor, red-purple skin with a red blush. Early production. Excellent storage quality. Ripens early May. Pollinate with Gulf Blaze or Gulf Beauty. **250 chill hours**

Mariposa: Red flesh, mottled maroon-over-green skin. Large fruit with small pit, nearly freestone. Sweet, juicy, firm, and delicious. Use fresh or cooked. Harvest in August. Pollinate with Beauty. **250 chill hours**

Robusto: Very good quality; ripens early June. Stores very well. Consistent producer and is an excellent pollenizer for other plums. **400 chill hours**

Scarlet Beauty: This beautiful plum has red-purple skin and soft, sweet red flesh. This is a Japanese-style, Gulf Series plum. It ripens May – June. Self-fertile but produces more with another variety planted nearby. **150 chill hours**

Multi-grafted Plums: More than one variety is grafted onto each rootstock. These specimens are perfect for smaller gardens where a variety of flavors and an extended harvest season is desired. They also mean that you don't need two trees to get good pollination. 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.