

UCSU 20/6.22/7,004  
c. 2

COLORADO STATE PUBLICATIONS LIBRARY  
UCSU20/6.22/7.004 c.2 local  
Feucht, James R./Tree and shrub fruits f



**Colorado State**  
University  
Cooperative  
Extension

# service in ACTION

RECEIVED

MAY 24 1990

COLORADO STATE LIBRARY  
State Publications Library

no. 7.004

## Tree and shrub fruits for the Colorado High Plains

James R. Feucht<sup>1</sup>

### Quick Facts

- Growing tree and shrub fruits successfully depends on proper soil, exposure and selection of varieties.
- When possible, fire blight-resistant apple varieties should be selected.
- Sour cherry varieties are more dependable than sweet cherry varieties.
- Several varieties of plums are considered among the hardiest tree fruits for the Colorado High Plains.
- Peaches are not as dependable for this area as are apples, plums and sour cherries.
- Fire blight is a severe detriment to the success of most varieties of pears.
- The early flowering habit of apricots, like peaches, subjects them to frost injury.
- Shrub fruits such as currants and gooseberries are very hardy and adapt to poor soils; they also attract birds to the yard.

Growing fruits in Colorado can be a pleasure and a challenge. Success is not only dependent on the ideal exposure and proper soil preparation but starts with the selection of certain varieties of fruit. Many midwest nursery catalogs offer appealing varieties. These often are illustrated in full color and the descriptions usually include the word "hardy." One must remember, however, that hardiness in the midwest is entirely different from hardiness in the Colorado High Plains, particularly in the selection of tree and shrub fruits. The following recommendations are based on the experience of many Colorado horticulturists over the years.

### Soil and Exposure

Fruits are best grown in well-drained soil. If the soil is a heavy clay type it is best to condition it to a depth of at least 12 inches (30.5 centimeters) with a coarse, organic material such as aged barnyard manure. The organic matter should be thoroughly mixed with the soil to help open the

soil and allow air and water penetration. See Service in Action sheet 7.222 *Soil—the key to successful gardening.*

When planting a fruit tree, dig the hole extra wide and improve the backfill before the tree is put in the ground.

Most fruits prefer full sun. However, it is best for raspberries to be in semi-shaded locations. Tree fruits, currants and gooseberries will do well in most any exposure.

To avoid damage from frost, tree fruits are best located away from low spots in the yard, particularly where there are fences or other obstructions that stop the flow of air. It is better to locate fruit trees on the "upper end" of your property.

Avoid placing fruit trees too close to buildings, particularly south and west exposures, as these will tend to cause bloom to occur early, subjecting them to frost injury.

### Apples

Many varieties of apples can be grown successfully in Colorado. Perhaps the biggest problem is fire blight (a bacterial disease). See 2.907, *Fireblight*. This disease often is more prevalent in crabapples than in domestic apples. Of the domestic apples, the most susceptible is Yellow Transparent, even though this variety is hardy, it often is a disappointment because of the disease. The more reliable varieties includes:

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Cox Orange       | Aromatic dessert apple. Yellow flesh.   |
| Red Delicious    | A good winter apple and very resistant to fire blight.  |
| Golden Delicious | A fall apple of good flavor that bears sooner than most varieties. It also is a good variety to plant with other apple trees to insure good pollination. Moderately resistant to fire blight. |
| McIntosh         | An all-purpose red apple.   |
| Jonathan         | A popular apple but fairly susceptible to fire blight.  |
| Fameuse          | Old variety similar to McIntosh.  |

Other apples available locally are Stayman's Prairie Spy, Northwest Greening, Joyce, Wealthy

<sup>1</sup>James R. Feucht, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension landscape plants specialist and professor, horticulture (9/88)

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Kenneth R. Bolen, director of Cooperative Extension, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado. Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination. To simplify technical terminology, trade names of products and equipment occasionally will be used. No endorsement of products named is intended nor is criticism implied of products not mentioned.

Lodi (an improved yellow transparent) and Haralson.

Many of these varieties are available as grafted five-in-one and also as dwarf and semi-dwarf. Multiple variety grafts are novelties and are useful as pollinators but often can be disappointing when one variety dies back from fire blight or freeze injury, leaving a lopsided tree. Dwarf and semi-dwarf varieties are proving to be successful once they are established. An advantage to these varieties is that they take little space in the yard and will produce fruit two to three years earlier than a standard apple variety.

## Cherries

The most dependable cherries for High Plains growing areas are the sour type. Sweet cherries should be planted only by those willing to risk losing the tree in a few years. Most cherry varieties must have a pollinator variety nearby for good fruit set. Varieties most suitable are:

Montmorency	The most popular variety not only for the home garden but a leader in commercial sour cherry production.
Meteor	Similar to Montmorency but a slightly more dwarf tree.
Van	A hardy tree bearing sweet fruit. Excellent pollinator for all sweet varieties.
Early Richmond	Considered the most hardy but the quality of fruit is inferior to Montmorency.
Black Tartarian	A sweet cherry that may produce fruit in some years. Subject to die-back in severe winters.
Kansas Sweet Stella	A sweet, early, dark red variety. Shown to have good winter hardiness and is self-pollinating.

## Plums

Plums are considered among the hardiest tree fruits for the Colorado High Plains and are dependable as far as fruit set almost every year. Among the many selections that can be made, the following are considered the best:

Stanley	Italian freestone variety.
Green Gage	An old but dependable variety having good flavor.
Blue Damson	An early-bearing, small-fruited plum. Fruits are of good flavor, bluish with a yellow flesh.
Waneta	A late-summer maturing variety with large, red fruit.
Sapalta	Considered one of the best for eating fresh from the tree but also excellent for canning.

## Peaches

Peaches are not considered as dependable as apples, plums or cherries for High Plains growers. One of the difficulties is their early flowering habit. Flowers often are nipped by frost, thus preventing fruit set. Despite the difficulties in growing peaches, they are worthwhile provided proper selections of varieties are made. Among the varieties recommended are:

Elberta	This is the common commercial peach produced on the Western Slope of Colorado. It is a bit more
---------	---

tender in most areas of the East Slope but frequently will produce a satisfactory crop.

Haven  
Polly

Many named varieties. Freestone. A white freestone variety that matures in late summer. Among the hardiest available.

Reliance

Considered hardiest of all varieties available. Freestone type.

Other peach varieties available locally include Halehaven, J.H.-Hale and Ranger (see 5.566 *Peach tree borer: characteristics and control.*)

## Pears

Because of the fire blight problem pears often are a disappointment to grow in the High Plains area. There has been some success, however, with the variety Bartlett, Kieffer, Maxine and Moonglo. Recent information indicates that Maxine and Moonglo have shown some blight resistance. (See 2.907, *Fire blight.*) Pears often are difficult to obtain from local nurseries because they generally are not stocked.

## Apricots

Much like peaches, apricots are not considered dependable for fruiting. They are even less dependable than peaches. This is not because of hardness of the plant, but because of their early flowering habit that makes them subject to frost. Try a thick mulch of wood chips or similar material applied after the ground has frozen in the fall. Even if apricots do not fruit, they are of use in the yard for aesthetic purposes. The glossy foliage is unequalled in plants of similar size and shape. The varieties 'Goldcot' and 'Moorpark' are considered worthy of trial in Colorado.

## Shrub Fruits

When all other fruits fail, currants and gooseberries will succeed. They will even adapt to some poor soils, take the coldest winters and can be included in shrub borders for aesthetic purposes, as well as bearing edible fruit and attracting birds.

Many native currants, including the Alpine and Golden species, can be utilized for cooking. These varieties, however, are not satisfactory for eating purposes. The best and most available variety is Red Lake. Gooseberry plants, which differ from currant bushes primarily in their very prickly stems, make excellent cover for birds and also are dependable plants that supply fruit for pies and jellies. These old-fashioned plants are beginning to return in many gardens. The Welcome and Pixwell varieties are reliable, available types to use. (See 7.005, *Currents and gooseberries for the home garden.*)

## Raspberries

Raspberries are available in two types—a dwarf native that produces fruit on one-year wood, and several varieties that produce a first crop in July on the previous year's wood and then a second crop in the fall on the new growth. Of the latter type, Indian Summer, Lathan, Heritage, Pathfinder, Trailblazer and September are excellent varieties. (See 7.001, *Raspberries for the home garden.*)