

## PEARS

### Pollination Groups

<b>A</b> Early flowering	LOUISE BONNE DE JERSEY PACKHAM'S TRIUMPH SECKLE
<b>B</b> Mid-season flowering	BETH BEURRE HARDY BEURRE SUPERFIN CONFERENCE DURONDEAU FERTILITY IMPROVED JOSEPHINE DE MALINES THOMPSON'S WILLIAM'S BON CHRETIEN
<b>C</b> Late flowering	CONCORDE DOYENNE DU COMICE GORHAM ONWARD WINTER NELIS

*Pears are obviously closely related to Apples. They are trained into the same range of tree types and the basic rules of pruning are just the same. There are many differences though and these include:*

\* Pears generally live longer. Fifty years is the normal life span for an Apple tree, but a Pear should live for a century or more.

\* Pears have different soil requirements. They will thrive in heavier soil than their more popular rival, but they are less happy in sandy soil, chalky soil and in salt-laden air.

\* Pears are more temperamental. Dessert types need more sun than Apples and they detest cold easterly winds.

\* Pears are more sensitive to frost. Blossom appears 2-4 weeks before Apple blooms open, which is a welcome sight but it means that the chance of frost damage is greater. Protect with fleece if practical.

\* Pears are grown on a more limited range of rootstocks. An Apple tree will reach 5ft or 25ft depending on the rootstock. Nearly all Pears are grown on Quince rootstocks. Quince A is the popular one, producing trees which grow about 10-20ft high.

\* Pears are less able to withstand drought but they are generally less prone to pests and diseases. There is one notable exception—birds, such as bull-finches, find the fruit buds of pears more attractive than those of Apples

\* Pears have far fewer varieties in the catalogues and at garden centres. Don't pick a cooker - use firm dessert Pears instead.

\* Pears are more likely to need a pollination partner in your garden. *Conference* is partly self-fertile but it prefers and most others positively need a pollination partner. If space is limited, choose several different cordons. Or you can plant a family tree. The basic type carries the big three - *Conference*, *Doyenne du Comice* and *William's Bon Cretien*

## Planting

The site for Pears should be chosen with a little more care than for Apples. Some shelter from cold winds is essential.

In northern districts choose a spot close to a wall - the microclimate will be warmer and less windy. Plant to the old soil mark - the union with the rootstock should be about 4" above ground level.

## Windbreaks

Pears flower earlier than Apples and at this time few pollinating insects are present. Turbulent air around the trees will deter them, so you should consider a windbreak if the site is exposed. A solid wall or fence over which the wind can blow will actually increase air turbulence - use a plastic windbreak through which the air can pass. A nearby hedge will provide a useful windbreak - it will gently reduce the wind speed for a distance of 15-30 times the height of the hedge.

## Picking

A Pear is ripe if it readily parts from the tree when lifted gently in the palm of the hand and given a slight twist. Skill is required to judge the correct time of picking. With early-ripening varieties the fruit should be removed when they are full-sized but before they have reached the fully-ripe stage described above. Cut the stalks and leave the fruit for a few days for the fuller flavour to develop. Eat as the ripen - do not attempt to store. Later varieties are ripened in store. Pick when they come away from the tree quite easily.

## PLUMS

### Pollination Groups

<b>A</b> Early flowering	None listed here - early frosts can cause havoc. Ariel Farleigh Damson	Some are offered in the catalogues. Ontario Warwickshire Drooper
<b>B</b> Mid-season flowering	CZAR DENNISTON'S SUPERB EARLY LAXTON EDWARDS MERRYWEATHER OPAL	PERSHORE YELLOW PURPLE PERSHORE RIVER'S EARLY PROLIFIC SANCTUS HUBERTUS VICTORIA
<b>C</b> Late flowering	CAMBRIDGE GAGE EARLY TRANSPARENT GAGE GIANT PRUNE	KIRKE'S BLUE MARJORIE'S SEEDLING OULLIN'S GOLDEN GAGE

Plums are the most popular of the stone fruits and they are also the easiest to grow. Choose the highest spot in the garden and a position which gets a lot of sun if you plan to grow a dessert Plum.

A Standard or half standard has no place in the ordinary garden. Even a bush or pyramid on the popular *St Julien A* rootstock can reach 20ft or more when mature. This would be a problem in a small garden.

Perhaps the best way of saving space is to grow the Plum as a fan against a south-facing wall. Note that Plums are not grown as espaliers nor cordons. An added advantage of the fan growth form is the ease with which netting can be used to protect the buds and fruit from birds.

Cropping should start when the tree is about 5 years old. Choose your plant with care - some fruit are sweet and others are sour.

## Rootstocks

The most widely used rootstock is *St Julien A* - this is the one to choose if conditions are less than ideal.

## Planting

Plums need a moisture-retentive but free-draining soil. Light soils which easily dry out must be enriched with humus. November is the best time for planting. Staking will be required for 5-6 years.

### DESSERT PLUM

### CULINARY PLUM

MATURE  
BUSH  
15-25ft  
high



Sweet - eaten fresh. Fleshy fruit - trees smaller and less hardy than culinary varieties. Most popular variety: *Victoria*

Rather tart - used for cooking. Fruit less fleshy than dessert varieties—trees more tolerant of poor conditions. Most popular variety: *Czar*

Plums are one of the earliest fruit trees to open their flowers in the spring. Many Plums are self-fertile, including the most popular dessert variety (*Victoria*) and the most widely grown cooker (*Czar*). Others need a pollination partner chosen from the same or adjacent group—see the table on the left. Buy 2 or 3 year old trees and if the site is unfavourable choose varieties in the late flowering group.

*Victoria* remains a good overall choice - it is reliable and flavour is acceptable, but it is susceptible to silver leaf disease.

## Feeding

Plums require more nitrogen than Apples - apply a late spring application of a nitrogen-rich liquid fertilizer.

## Pruning

There are 2 basic points to remember - do not prune in winter and paint all cuts with Arbrex. These measures are necessary to reduce the risk of silver leaf infection.

### BUSHES

#### Training a 2 or 3 year old tree

Prune in March. The simplest procedure is to follow the plan for Apples. The goal is to have 3-5 strong branches at the 2 year stage—these branches should be as near to horizontal as possible. At the 3 year stage there should be about 8 strong primary and secondary branches which are well spaced.

#### Training an established tree

Prune in June-late July. Keep pruning to a minimum. The sole purpose of cutting out wood at this stage is to keep the tree healthy and to reduce overcrowding. Remove dead, broken and diseased branches. Cut back overcrowded branches.