

Ison's Nursery & Vineyard

Cherry Tree Planting Instructions

Cherry Trees



The cherries sold fresh in most markets are sweet cherries -- they have a thick, rich, almost plum like texture and sweet taste. If you like your cherries cooked, then you have probably eaten tart cherries, which are juicier and slightly sour.

About This Plant

Tart cherries thrive in zones 4 to 6, sweet cherries in zones 5 to 7. Tart cherries are self-fertile, while sweet cherries need a compatible variety for cross-pollination. Choose sweet cherry varieties that are especially adapted to your climate and resistant to the major diseases in your area. Standard-size trees start bearing in about their fourth year, dwarf trees in about their third year. One mature, standard-size tart or sweet cherry tree will produce 30 to 50 quarts of cherries each year; a dwarf

tree, about 10 to 15 quarts.

Site Selection

Choose a sunny site with good air circulation and deep, well-drained soil. Avoid low areas or places surrounded by buildings or shade trees, where cold air settles.

Planting Instructions

Plant cherry trees while they are dormant. Set bare-root trees atop a small mound of soil in the center of the planting hole, and spread the roots down and away without unduly bending them. Identify original planting depth by finding color change from dark to light as you move down the trunk towards the roots. If the tree is grafted, position the inside of the curve of the graft union away from the afternoon sun.

For container-grown trees, remove the plant from its pot and eliminate circling roots by laying the root ball on its side and cutting through the roots with shears. Don't cover the top of the root-ball with backfill because it could prevent water from entering.

Space cherries 20 to 30 feet apart.

Care

Train standard-size cherry trees to a modified leader. Prune trees every year in late winter to encourage the growth of new fruiting wood. Don't prune in the fall. Fertilize each spring until trees start to bear, then fertilize only after harvest each season. Cherries are susceptible to a number of different disease and insect pests, depending on region. Contact your cooperative extension office for information on managing pests in your area.

Harvesting

The sugar content of cherries rises dramatically in the last few days of ripening, so wait until they turn fully red, black, or yellow (depending on the variety) before harvesting. Harvest as the cherries ripen over the course of about a week. Pick the cherries with the stems attached, being careful not to tear off the fruit spur that will produce fruit year after year.



