Thank you for your order. Fruit trees can be an attractive and useful addition to the home landscape. This fact sheet will help you to establish new fruit trees that will provide you with beauty and fruit for years to come. Should you have any questions regarding your trees, call our office and we will assist you. Your local County Extension Office can also be very helpful if you have problems with your trees or if you need additional information.

Receiving Your Trees:
If trees arrive and you are unable to plant them immediately, store them in a cool place such as your basement, garage or carport. If they need to be there for any length of time, you will need to do one of the following. Either one of these methods will keep your trees for up to six weeks:

1. Dig a shallow trench and lay the plants on their side with roots in the trench. Cover the roots with moist soil. This is called heeling in. Make sure the soil stays moist. Avoid exposing the roots to frozen temperatures and never let the roots of the trees dry out.

2. Use a large tub or trash can and cover the roots of the trees with peat moss or soil and keep the roots damp.

Digging the Hole:
Select a site with direct sunlight. Allow enough room between the planting site and buildings, trees, power lines or other obstructions for the tree to fill its space when full grown.

Tree size varies with different species and the rootstock that the tree is on. The nursery where you bought the tree can advise you as to how much space the tree will need when full grown.

Fruit trees are tolerant of a fairly wide range of soil types, but the soil should be well-drained, with a minimum of 18 inches of soil above any ledge or hardpan.

Start by cutting through the sod in a circle that is about a foot wider than the diameter of the root ball. Roll the sod out of the hole and discard it or use it to cover a place where you want grass. Then dig a hole wide enough to allow the root system to fit without roots wrapping around the edge of the hole in a circle. Dig the hole deep enough to allow the tree to be planted with the graft union two to three inches above ground. This planting depth is critical for trees on dwarf or semi-dwarf rootstocks. If the tree is planted too deep and the graft union is below the soil line, the scion variety will form roots and the tree will become a standard-sized tree.
**Filling the Hole:**

What should you put in the planting hole? Only roots, clean soil and water! Never put any fertilizer in the planting hole. If the soil is poor, you can mix in peat moss or thoroughly conditioned compost before filling the hole. A ratio of up to 50/50 peat to soil may be beneficial.

Trim off any broken or damaged roots before planting. Place the tree in the hole, and after making sure that the depth is correct, fill the hole with clean topsoil. It is helpful at this stage to have someone hold the tree straight while the hole is being filled. Pack the soil in the hole by gently stamping it with your feet. After the hole is filled, water the tree with two to five gallons of water, poured slowly enough so that the water doesn’t run off.

**Care, Fertilizing and Pruning:**

All newly planted fruit trees will benefit from being staked. This will result in a straighter tree with more growth. Staking is especially important for trees planted on a wind-blown site.

Around April 1st, after the tree has started to grow you can apply a nitrogen fertilizer. Apply one ounce of actual nitrogen in a 12-inch circle around the base of the tree, and make sure the tree is well-watered after fertilizing. You can also use 10-10-10 fertilizer. We recommend about 1/2 pound of 10-10-10 in a complete circle 12 inches around the base of the tree. Another application can be added June 1st. All fertilizer should be applied before mid-June. Late application of fertilizer can lead to late-season growth, and the tree may not harden off in time to withstand winter.

Watering the new tree is important to help get it started. Do not water after planting until new growth begins unless the soil seems very dry. A good rule is to apply five gallons of water around the base of the tree every week of the growing season in which there is less than an inch of rainfall.

Apples and pears are usually trained as central leader or cone-shaped trees. If the tree is an unbranched “whip,” prune the stem to a height of 40-44 inches above the soil line. This will stimulate the buds just below the cut to grow. The top bud will grow vertically and form the leader, or trunk of the tree. The next one or two buds can be rubbed off with the fingers to prevent them from competing with the leader.

The buds that grow out below the top two or three should be retained to form the scaffold branches. Remove branches that grow out below a height of 18 inches from the ground. Bend the branches that remain to an angle of 45 to 65 degrees from vertical using clothespins, toothpicks or small weights. This keeps these branches from growing so strongly that they compete with the leader, and it stimulates flower production.

Stone fruit trees (peaches, plums) are usually trained as open-center (vase-shaped) trees. Two or three side branches are selected, and the remainder of the tree is cut off just above the top branch. Contact your county Extension office for other bulletins on training and pruning fruit trees.

**Weed Control:**

Weeds compete with young trees for water and nutrients. A weed-free zone should be established at the base of the tree that extends out to form a circle with a diameter of two to three feet. Mulch, herbicide or cultivation may be used to prevent weeds.

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