Why plant a fruit tree? There are several reasons and benefits. One is most obvious: the fruit. By growing your own you know exactly what you are eating, what it has been sprayed with or, more important, what it hasn't been sprayed with. Fruit left to ripen on a tree tastes sweeter and has higher concentrations of minerals and vitamins. Moreover, fruit trees are aesthetically pleasing; they have flowers that precede the fruit in spring. The fruit are fun to watch ripen. In the heat of a summer's day you can sit in the shade, and in fall the leaves turn to their autumn colours.

## Fertilising

**In the garden:** at the time of planting add lime (no more fertiliser is required in the first year). In future years to achieve a good canopy with a dark green appearance, use plenty of well-rotted animal manure; we recommend sheep pellets. Apply Oderings Citrus & Fruit Tree Fertiliser at 3–4 month intervals once new growth appears. It is a good idea to mulch your trees; this provides a better uptake of nutrients and ensures an even supply of moisture, as well as keeping the roots cooler. Promote the growth of flowering buds with an autumn application of potassium in the form of Sulphate of Potash. Initiation of flower buds starts in summer and autumn and is influenced by temperature and day lengths. On the packaging of fertilisers and growing media (potting mix), you will see a ratio of N (for nitrogen), P (for phosphorus) and K (for potassium). Nitrogen encourages leafy growth, phosphorus is for root growth and potassium is for fruit and flowers. While a balance of all elements is required for fruit trees, the most important is potassium.

**In pots:** Use Yates Fruit & Flower Booster Liquid Potash, which can be diluted and then applied with a watering can over soil at 2–3 week intervals over the growing season. Alternatively use Oderings Total Replenish in spring; this is a slow-release fertiliser that will feed the plant for six months. Then during flowering and fruiting, incorporate Yates Fruit & Flower Booster Liquid Potash every three weeks until harvest. This product is also suitable for use for fruit trees grown in the ground.

## Pruning/Thinning

If your tree produces fruit in its first year, this fruit should be removed in the interest of succeeding crops. If you intend to train a tree on a wall or trellis, fasten the branches to wires on the wall during their first year and remove new branches that form and grow upright; this will encourage open growth. Plant your fruit trees 2.5–5m apart depending on varieties. For more info on pruning, please see our Deciduous Fruit Tree Pruning brochure.

Dwarf fruit trees will set more fruit than they can carry and if not thinned may not bloom the following year. 20 days after blooming thin out the extra little fruits; try to have one fruit for each 15–20cm (6–8 inches) along a branch.

## Watering

The most common reason some plants that do not thrive is either overwatering or under watering. Plants should be watered only as needed. For most plants, the upper surface of the soil should be allowed to become dry to touch before watering. Water thoroughly by slowly filling the container or leaving water running over the soil around the plant in the garden for a good 30 seconds. Good drainage is essential. Generally watering will need to be done 2–3 times a week during early to mid-spring, while almost daily watering may be required during the hot summer months. If incorporating mulch each season this will help to reduce your watering and help to maintain a constant soil temperature for the plants, giving consistent growth and fruit. During autumn and winter, watering should only be done when the plants are dry – probably every 2–3 weeks in containers and every month or so in the garden.

## Spraying

Like all plants the key to low maintenance is having very healthy plants. Personally I incorporate both Neem and either Ocean Solids or a seaweed-based fertiliser for all my edible plants. This will also ensure that plants are less susceptible to diseases or insect infestations.

For more details on winter spraying of your fruit trees, please see our Winter Spraying brochure, and for a spring/summer spraying regime, use any of the following. (Please remember, if you want to use the correct spray, bring in a few leaves for diagnosis as this is just a general guide only.) Our recommendations are Yates Nature's Way Fruit & Veggie Gun or Yates Success Ultra for insect issues and Yates Nature's Way Fungus Spray Concentrate for funguses.

## Planting

Although fruit trees should be planted in late winter or early spring, they can be planted at any time of year provided ample water is provided while they establish themselves. The root system of a dwarf fruit tree is not as vigorous as standard fruit trees and will soon die if in poorly drained soil. At the time of planting, place a stake in the ground 15cm (6 inches) from the stem of your tree. Pack top soil around the roots and water well. When planting into a pot, plant in Oderings Fruit & Veggie Mix.

Many fruit trees and some ornamentals are grafted onto rootstocks. These rootstocks control the vigour of the plant, disease resistance and the quality and quantity of the fruit produced. The join between the fruit rootstock and the main fruit tree is easy to identify, it will appear as a bulge or kink, this is called the scion. When planting the scion must always be planted above the soil level.

# Proud Supplier of Fruit Trees to Oderings.

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# Deciduous Fruit Trees

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