

## Fruit trees need sun and water

It takes sun to make sugar—the more the better. Plant fruit trees so they get at least 6–8 hours of sun, preferably afternoon sun. Choose a south and west exposure, if possible.

Fruit trees also need water, since there's little rain in the northwest between June and October, when fruit matures. Consider planting dwarf trees, shrubs and vines in rows, to take advantage of drip or soaker irrigation.

The following planting instructions are excerpted from *How to Plant a Fruit Tree*, by Ted Swensen of the Home Orchard Society, Portland, Oregon.



### 1. Prepare the site

Dig a hole 18 – 24 inches deep and significantly wider than the tree's root ball. Discard (or compost) the top layer of sod and/or weeds. Keep the top soil and the subsoil (a lighter brown) in separate piles. Break up the bottom and sides of the hole with the spade. It's important that there is loose soil that will allow the roots to spread.

### 2. Prepare the tree

Shake off the loose soil and prune back any dead or broken roots. Prune long roots back to the same length as the rest of the roots. If the tree is bare root, soak it in water for at least 12 hours.

### 3. Plant

Set the tree in the hole and spread the roots so they aren't curled or twisted. Be sure no roots are wrapped around the tree's trunk and remove any plastic or wire from the roots.

Place the roots in the hole so that the graft union sits about six inches above soil level. Check that the tree is vertical, not tilted. First fill the hole with *subsoil*, making sure that the graft remains six inches above the soil level. Then add topsoil. Water the hole completely, and if the soil compacts, add more soil to fill the hole up to the soil line. *Do not add fertilizer.* The graft should still be above the soil line.

### 4. Stake

Put the stake six to 12 inches from the tree trunk and attach it to the trunk loosely (a figure-8 loop around the tree and stake works well), allowing the tree to flex in the wind. If tying the label to the trunk or branch, use twine (not wire).

### 5. Mulch

Add four to six inches of mulch around the base of the tree. Compost or wood chips work well. The mulch blanket holds moisture in the ground, moderates soil temperature, and reduces competition from grass and weeds. The type of mulch can affect the acidity of the soil and its nutrient level. See Linda Bergeson's article on mulching fruit trees at the Home Orchard Society in Portland.

<http://www.homeorchardsociety.org/article/18/>

### 6. Water and weed.

During the first year (at least), keep weeds at least 12 – 24 inches away from the trunk. Water well, at least until mid-August.



 **Don't forget to water!**