



POTTED FRUIT TREE GROWING GUIDE

Congratulations on becoming an owner of a new potted fruit tree!

Below is a quick guide to getting your tree established and some tips for how to avoid common problems. More information is available at fourwindsgrowers.com. Now that you have unpacked the tree, be sure to remove the plastic bag that keeps the soil in place for shipping.

Potted fruit trees are the easiest trees to plant. The hard part of getting the tree to root is done and your job at this point is to prepare a nice home for your new tree. Our Potted fruit trees are grown in tall and compact containers that are designed to maximize tree size while also being efficient to ship.

Location:

Location is key to the overall success of the tree and the quality of the fruit. Fruit trees prefer a location that has full sunlight exposure. Potted fruit trees are all grafted on hardy rootstocks to give you the best chances of success in a variety of soil types and climates. Choose a location that receives 8-10 hours of direct sunlight per day. This location should have well-draining soil.

Planting:

Prepare your planting site by digging a hole about twice the volume of your tree pot. If you notice that your soil is very hard, now would be the ideal time to perform a drainage test. You can test your soil drainage by filling the hole with water. If the hole takes more than 2 hours to drain completely then your soil is poor draining and will need to be amended. If your location is heavy in clay soil that drains poorly, consider mounding up above the native soil with compost and mulch and then planting in your well-draining mound. Once the hole has been dug, backfill with a 50/50 mix of compost and native soil so that the tree can sit flush with the native soil level.

Once your hole is prepped, you will want to press the tree pot sides and gently remove the tree from its container. Once removed, gently loosen the sides & bottom of the root mass with your hands. Then place the tree in the planting hole and backfill with more of your 50/50 compost and native soil mix. This mix is important to create a buffer zone of soil that is easy for your tree to root into while also introducing the roots to your native soil.

Now that your new tree is planted, it is time to give the trees a thorough soak. This step is very important to close any air gaps that may have been created while backfilling the tree. If your tree has not yet broken

dormancy, only water once a month until the tree leaves out. **IMPORTANT:** Overwatering before the tree wakes from dormancy can kill your tree.

Post Planting Tree Care:

Prune the canopy of your tree at this time. The goal here is to have a canopy that is roughly as large as your root mass. By balancing the root mass with the canopy, you will see much less dieback on your branches and a higher success rate with your new tree. If you want the fruiting wood to begin low, smaller trees may be cut back at planting time to a height as low as the knee (15-20 inches). Any remaining side limbs should be cut back to one or two buds. Larger trees may be cut above existing well-placed low limbs, or they too may be cut back low to force new, lower limbs. If this step is skipped, you will likely see low vigor from the first season, dieback from these long branches, or even complete failure to break dormancy.

Protect the trunk of your tree from sunburn, pests, and insects with IV Organics Plant Guard tree paint and foliar spray. Paint your newly planted tree from the ground up. This step is particularly important for our growers in the southwest where the climate and the intense sun tend to damage trees.

Spread 3" - 5" of wood chips or straw over the bare ground. Keep mulch away from the trunk to prevent the trunk from rotting. This insulating blanket will keep the roots of the trees warm and growing and prevent freezing and thawing of the soil. It will also keep the roots of the trees cool and moist through summer.

Stake trees that stand over 3' tall or in very windy areas for at least a year until their roots grab a firm hold of the soil. Tie the trunk to one or two stakes set beside the tree, using some soft material or padded wire. Allow for some movement of the trunk.

If your tree does not break dormancy by May, you will want to check for signs of life on the tree. One of the best ways to determine if a tree or any plant is dead is the scratch test. With your nail, gently scratch off the top layer in a small spot on a branch or on the trunk. Just beneath the dry, outer layer of bark in a tree's trunk lies the cambium that transfers nutrients throughout the tree. In a living tree, this is green; in a dead tree, it is brown and dry. If the tree is green and still living, stop watering for the next 14 days. Bare root trees have no leaves and no way to expel excess water. If your tree is dead or does not push after 14 days, contact your grower for more guidance.

Once the tree breaks dormancy and throughout its first growing season, diligently maintain a weekly watering schedule. One gallon per week per-square-foot spread of the roots. This is also a great time to start fertilizing your tree. Regularly feeding your tree with a dose of Romeo or G&B Organic fertilizer is a great way to boost new growth during the growing season.

With proper planting and care, new buds will soon push out and your tree will start its journey!