



PLANTING SITE

Apricots are the first fruit trees to bloom in the spring and because of this they are susceptible to spring frost damage. Plant apricot trees in spots where spring frosts are rare. Apricots can be grown where peaches will grow. Apricot trees are reasonably winter hardy, but not so hardy as apples. Plant in well-drained soils. Apricots do not like 'wet' feet.

VARIETIES

PERFECTION Needs cross pollination. Very large fruit. Orange skin and flesh. Good quality and flavor. Ripens last week of July. Very frost tender.

SKAHA Developed at the Summerland Research Station. Large, firm, bright orange when mature. Fruit has red blush, attractive. Ripens in the third week of July. Moderately frost tender.

GOLDRICH Requires cross pollination. Developed by Washington State University. Fruit is attractive. Large, orange-yellow waxy skin color. Orange flesh. Fruit quality is good when fully mature. Matures in late July.

GOLDBAR Requires cross pollination. A new variety from Washington State. Fruit is large, high quality, orange with some red blush. Not winter hardy.

GOLDSTRIKE Requires cross pollination. A new variety from Washington State. Large sized fruit, orange with some red blush, firm.

TOMCOT Partially self fruitful. Fruit ripens 3-4 days earlier than Goldstrike. Fruit is creamy yellow with no blush. It's more flavorful than Goldstrike or Goldbar, but fruit is smaller. Tree is not winter hardy, but is productive.

HARGRAND A large, juicy, good flavored variety developed in Ontario. Also Harglow, Harlayne, and Harogem.

PLANTING

Apricot trees grow to become relatively large. An area with a minimum diameter of 25 ft. (7.6 meters) should be allowed. Select a well grown one or two year old tree from the nursery. Two year old trees should have at least four or five well-spaced branches, with a good root system. The usual practice is to plant early in the spring, but planting can be completed in the fall when weather conditions are good and the soil is moist.

Prepare a hole slightly larger than the root spread. Trim off any broken roots before planting. If the tree is in a plastic pot, remove the pot. If it comes in a fiber pot, you can slit the sides and plant with the pot or remove the pot. Sprinkle a handful of bone meal (phosphorus) in the bottom of the hole to help the root system get established. Place the tree in the hole. Mix in some peat moss or compost with the planting soil. Replace the soil in the hole, treading the soil firmly around the roots to ensure that the tree is securely anchored in the ground. Give the tree a good watering. An area of about 4 ft. in diameter (1.2

meters) should be kept free of weeds or lawn grass during the early stages of growth. Organic or plastic mulches can also be used to suppress weed growth around the tree.

PRUNING

At planting time cut a one year old tree back to a height of 33 to 36 inches (82.5-90 cm). If a two year old tree is planted, reduce the branches to four well spaced shoots and shorten each one by one third. Apricots are usually grown as open center trees with the central leader removed. Aim to develop a framework of well-spaced branches that are capable of bearing heavy crops without breaking. In subsequent years build up the framework branches and cut out the entire shoots that are crowded or crossing into the center of the tree. Narrow angled crotches should be avoided as these are sources of weakness. Because apricot trees can grow to be large, in later years it may be necessary to cut or head back limbs in order to encourage more growth in the lower parts of the tree. Always cut back to a lateral or side growing branch.

SOIL & FERTILIZER

Soil in the Southern Interior are chronically low in organic matter and nitrogen. Minor elements such as magnesium, boron, and zinc may be low as well. If good weed control is practiced, no fertilizer should be required for the first two or three years. When the tree starts to crop, apply one ounce (28 grams) of a complete fertilizer such as 12-16-12 (which contains minor elements) per square yard (0.8 sq. meters) in the fall. In mature trees the aim is to get 15 inches (38 cm) of new growth every year. Nutrients can also be applied as foliar sprays in early summer. Organic growers should use approved sources of organic nutrients.

THINNING

If the tree sets a heavy crop and no thinning is done, the fruit will be small at harvest time. Thus, removal of part of the crop is necessary. To do this, space the fruits about 1 -2 inches (3.8-5 cm) apart. Early thinning results in more uniform ripening. Fruit on well-thinned trees will ripen several days earlier than on poorly or unthinned ones. There will still be mixed maturities, even on well thinned trees, so more than one pick may be necessary. Heat greatly accelerates maturity

HARVESTING

Apricots must mature on the tree but they can ripen either on or off it. If left until they are good to eat, they will bruise very easily with picking and transport. Background color is used as a guide for harvest maturity:

PESTS & DISEASES

Insects that attack apricot trees are: Aphids, Earwigs, Fruit Tree Leafrollers, and Peach Tree Borer. Diseases include: Brown Rot and Coryneum Blight. Home gardeners often apply a dormant spray of oil and lime-sulfur. **DO NOT** apply lime-sulfur on apricots. It will burn the fruit buds and shoots. For more information on pest control check the "Gardeners Guide to Fruit Tree Sprays" published by the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food, or consult the B.C.M.A.F. publication "Pest Control for the Home and Garden" . Organic gardeners should use accepted organic methods of pest control.

Thanks to John Price, P.Ag. Horticulturist