



Cherry Tree Brochure

The cherry is a popular backyard tree grown for fruit and shade. Cherry trees produce the first fresh fruit of the season, followed by the other kinds of tree fruit. Winter injury can occur when winter temperatures fall below -10 F (-24 C). Trunk bark splitting or sun scald injury to tree trunks are common if trees have a southwest exposure (SouthwestInjury), hardy to Zone 5. Sweet cherries usually bloom in late April. At this time of year the crop may be damaged by late spring frost. Sour cherries are hardier than sweet cherries, with Montmorency being as hardy as apple trees. Hardy to Zone 4.

Varieties

Sweet Cherries

Early:

Christalina:	Ripens 5 days before Van. An extremely attractive dark red cherry. Fruit size is moderate to large. Tolerant to rain splitting. Not self-fertile.
Sandra Rose:	Self-fertile. Matures 3 days after Van. Large, dark red fruit, shiny and split resistant. Tree is productive. Fruit is moderately firm with good flavor. Split resistant.
Bing:	Excellent fruit quality. Susceptible to rain splitting. Winter tender and spring frost tender. Yields are not high, with high cull rates. Not self-fertile.
Van:	Continues to be an important variety. Fruit is large, black and firm. Good flavor with a short stem. Heavy annual producer. Excellent pollinator. Ripens late June to early July. Not self-fer

Mid-Season:

Lambert:	Still a main variety with good yields. Ripens 1-2 weeks later than Bing. Not self-fertile. Fruit is dark red and medium sized. Tree is heavy bearing.
Stella:	Large fruit size and high yield. Self-fertile. The first self-fertile cherry developed at the Summerland Research Station. The tree can overset resulting in small fruit size. Good pollinator for other varieties. Fruit has sweet, juicy flesh and rich flavor.

Late Season:

Lapins:	Self-fertile. Crops annually yields better than Lambert. Fruit is dark red, large firm and resistant to splitting. Matures 2 days after Lambert. It is the most widely planted cherry in the Southern Interior.
Skeena:	Self-fertile. Reasonably split resistant. Very productive matures 3-4 days after Lambert (mid July). Fruit is black, large and very firm, juicy and sweet.
Sweetheart:	Self-fertile. Mature 5-10 days after Lambert. Fruit is medium size with good flavor. The latest maturing variety currently available. Tree is precocious.

TART (SOOR) VARIETIES:

Montmorency:	The standard for pie cherries. Medium large, bright red fruit with firm yellow flesh. Rich, tart, tangy flavor. Tree grows to 15' tall. Hardy to -40 degrees F. (-40 C). Self-fertile
Meteor:	Fruit resembles Montmorency. Tart, juicy, meaty flesh with small free pit. Tree is a natural genetic dwarf, growing 8-12' tall. Self fruitful. Hardy to -50F. Tree is spur-type. Ripens a week later than Montmorency.
North Star:	Large fruited Morello type with thin, light red skin, red flesh, red juice with small freestone. Fruit will turn mahogany if left on the tree. Crack resistant. A natural dwarf tree 6-12' tall. Self-fruitful. Heavy crops. Hardy to -40 F (-40 C).
Schatten Morello::	Self fertile. Crimson purple skin color. Dark red flesh. Firm with good flavor. Ripens late July. Tree is very hardy. Popular in Europe

Note: There are many other cherry Varieties available.

ROOTSTOCKS

Cherry trees are usually grown on Mazzard or Mahaleb seedlings, or clonal selection Mazzard F 12/1 which gives vigorous, standard sized trees. Recently some new rootstocks such as colt and the Gisela series produce fruit trees from standard size down to 45% of normal. These new root stocks are not yet widely tested in B.C. Semi-dwarf cherry trees may be kept at 12 ft. high (3.6 meters).

DWARF VARIETIES FOR SWEET CHERRIES: At the present time dwarf sweet cherry trees are not as small as dwarf apples.

DWARF VARIETIES FOR SOUR CHERRIES: Montmorency can be kept as a small tree. Meteor and North Star are dwarf trees and can be kept at 6-8 feet tall.

PLANTING DISTANCES

Standard sweet cherry trees should be planted about 20 ft. apart (6Meters) and some distance from the house so that there is adequate air circulation and light. Semi-dwarf sweet cherries can be planted as

close as 12-15 ft. apart (3.6 - 4.6 meters). Montmorency sour cherry can also be planted at these close distances.

PLANTING

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 injured or 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 4ft (1.2 meters) around the tree 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

Cherry trees are vigorous and fast growing. In the nurseries and garden centers, cherry trees range from 5-8 ft. tall (1.5-2.4 meters). If left alone the fruiting area may not be reached from the ground, necessitating use of ladders. Home gardeners need to think about their needs, namely fruit, shade, lawn mowers, etc. Normally, at planting time trees are headed at 30-40 inches above the ground. If the tree is for shade or if you need to get mowers under the scaffold branches, you may choose to head higher. Cherry trees are trained to an open-center system. Retention of the central leader will result in a tall, narrow tree. If a two year old tree is planted, reduce the branches to four well-spaced shoots and shorten each by one-third. 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 entire shoots that are crowded or crossing into the tree center. Narrow angled crotches should be avoided as these are sources of weakness.

SOIL & FERTILIZER

Soils 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 also contains minor elements) per square yard (0.8 sq.m) in the fall. Nutrients can be applied as foliar sprays in early summer. Organic growers should use approved sources of organic nutrients. Mature cherry trees should have 12" - 14" of new growth (30-35 cm) every year.

HARVESTING

Sweet cherries are picked in late June through the month of July. For red cherries, leave on the tree until they have developed a full mahogany to black colour. Once picked, no further ripening takes place. Cherries can only be stored for a short period of time.

PESTS & DISEASES

The most common insect pests of cherries are: Cherry Fruit Fly, Black Cherry Aphid, Fruit Tree Leafroller, and Cherry Slug. The main disease is Brown Rot. The main other pest of cherries is birds. They eat cherries and they don't wait until they are ripe. Various methods of bird control used are: netting, plastic tapes and streamers, dummy owls, balloons with eyes painted on them, and aluminum pie plates. For control recommendations check the "Gardeners Guide to Fruit Tree Sprays" published by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food, or consult B.C.M.A.F. publication "Pest Control For The Home Gardener". Organic gardeners should use accepted organic control methods.

Thanks to John Price, P.Ag., Horticulturist