



Compact Fruit Shrubs

Fifty years ago almost all fruit trees in the Okanagan were grown on standard seedling rootstocks. This produced very large trees that could reach 30 feet tall by 30 feet wide. They were slow to come into production.

If a home gardener wanted a fruit tree, it meant that a large lot was needed, care was very laborious, with large, awkward ladders needed to allow people to reach the upper limbs to prune thin and pick the fruit. Pest control was also laborious.

During the past 50 years the size of our fruit trees has been shrinking. In the case of apple trees we have gone from standard to semi-standard to semi-dwarf to fully dwarf trees 6 feet tall (9 M).

The use of the Old Home Farmingdale rootstocks has helped to reduce the size of pear trees. The Gisela series of rootstocks from Germany has resulted in smaller cherry trees, peach trees, nectarines and Italian prune trees can be kept as small, manageable trees by pruning. The new Pixie rootstock looks promising to reduce the size of apricot and plum trees.

Over the course of the last 50 years, building lots have become smaller and families have become smaller. Home gardeners still want to grow their own fruit, but there no longer is a desire for large fruit trees.

The small fruit trees are easier to manage for pruning, thinning and picking. In addition, pest control is much easier. Fruit can be just as big, if not bigger on smaller trees.

If you are looking for small fruit trees, go to your nursery or garden centres and see what they have. Garden centre employees should be able to tell you how large a fruit tree will become and how much room they will need in your garden. Landscape and yard maintenance company employees would also be able to help you in this regard.