



## Pear Tree Brochure

Sites where winter temperatures frequently drop below  $-15^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-27^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) should be avoided as should sites which are prone to frequent spring frosts. Pear trees prefer a deep finely textured soil with good drainage. They are at their best on silt loams or clay loams. Pears do not thrive on gravelly soils.

### VARIETIES:

AURORA	Ripens just before Bartlett. Fruit is large and bright yellow with light russetting. Flesh is juicy with sweet, aromatic flavor. It is a high quality dessert pear. Tree is vigorous and spreading. Not resistant to Fire Blight. Introduced in 1964 from New York State. Bartlett is one parent.
BARTLETT	Matures at the end of August. Excellent for fresh eating and canning. Fruit is medium large and green when picked. Yellow when ripe. Tree has upright growth, is winter tender and susceptible to Fire Blight.
BOSC	A fine flavoured dessert variety, ripening in early September. Fruit has a long neck and russeted skin. Tree is hardy but susceptible to Fire Blight. Trees are large, upright, slow growing. Fruit is tender, aromatic and juicy.
SIERRA	Developed at the Summerland Research Station. Fruit ripens in late September, just before Anjou. It is an excellent high quality variety for home gardeners. Some Fire Blight resistance.
SPARTLETT	An improved Bartlett with fruit at least one-third larger (very large). Matures in early September, 10 days after regular Bartlett. Tree is hardy but susceptible to Fire Blight.
FLEMISH BEAUTY	The tree is very winter hardy but susceptible to Fire Blight. Fruit is large, blushed, attractive with good flavour. Matures in early September. It is self fertile. Good for home gardeners in cold areas.
ANJOU	The main winter pear grown in BC. Fruit matures at the end of September. Fruit is large, short necked and stays green when ripe. The tree is more winter hardy than Bartlett and has fair resistance to Fire Blight.
RED PEARS	Red skinned selections have been developed for several varieties and there are several named red varieties.
ASIAN PEARS	Sometimes called apple pears because the flesh is crisp like an apple, rather than soft like regular pears. Not widely grown in BC. Many varieties are only hardy to Zone 6. Trees are slow to come into bearing and yields are lower than European pears. The most common variety is 20 <sup>th</sup> Century. Other varieties are Chojuro and Kosui.

### POLLINATION:

With a few exceptions, it is generally agreed that cross pollination is necessary. Plant at least two varieties 30 ft. apart (9m). Bees do not find pear flowers to be very attracted.

### PLANTING DISTANCES:

Pears on dwarfing rootstock can be planted about 12 feet apart (3.7m). Bartlett trees are naturally small and can be planted 15' apart (4.6m). Most other varieties will need 20 - 25' spacing (6-7m).

### PLANTINGS:

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 soil is moist. Prepare a hole slightly larger than the root spread. Trim off any broken or

injured roots before planting. If the tree is in a plastic pot, remove the pot. If it comes in a fibre pot, you can slit the sides and plant with the pot or remove the pot. Sprinkle a handful of bonemeal (phosphorous) in the bottom of the hole to help the root system get established quickly. Place the tree in the hole. Mix in some peat moss or compost with the planting soil. Replace the soil in the hole, treating the soil firmly around the roots to ensure the tree is firmly anchored in the ground. Give the tree a good watering. An area of about 4' diameter (1.2m) 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:

At planting time, cut a one year old tree back to a height of 30 inches (76 cm). Pears are trained to a central leader or modified open centre. If a two year old tree is planted, maintain the central leader and keep four well spaced shoots. Shorten the central leader and the side shoots. In subsequent years, maintain the central leader by heading the central extension shoot by 1/3 or 1/2 every year. Lateral branches should be spread outwards by using wood or wire spreaders or by tying down. Keep these at an angle of around 45° from the verticle. This encourages early bearing. As the tree starts to bear, prune for convenience in picking and spraying and to allow light to enter all parts of the tree. Where branches tend to crowd, thin them out by removing some branches completely.

## SOIL & FERTILIZER

Soild in the Southern Interior are chronically low in organic matter and nitrogen. Minor elements such as Magnesium, Boron, and Xinc may also 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). Apply fertilizer in the fall. In mature pear trees, the aim is to get 15 inches (38cm) of new growth every year. Nutrients can also be applied as foliar sprays. Organiz growers should use approved organic fertilizer material.

## THINNING

On many pear varieties the fruit sets heavily and requires thinning to ensure adequate fruit size and to prevent overloading of the tree. Varieties such as Bartlett should be thinned by removing the small fruitlets in June. An average spacing of 8 inches (20cm) between the fruits is usually adequate.

## HARVESTING

The majority of pear varieties should be harvested while still green. If pears are left on the trees until the skin colour has changed to yellow they will break down internally and will be unfit for consumption. Look for a change in the skin colour from grass green to a lighter green.

## STORAGE AND RIPENING

Bartlett and Bosc pears will ripen in a week if placed in a tightly closed plastic bag and stored at 60-65° F (16-19° C). They will not keep more than a week under these conditions. If pears are to be held for storage, the storage temperature must be as close to 30° F (-11° C) as possible, with a relative humidity of 85-90%. Anjou and other winter pears will ripen very slowly if held in basement storage in plastic bags. To accelerate ripening of those late varieties, add one or two ripe apples to the bag. The apples will produce additional ethylene gas to speed up the ripening process.

## PESTS & DISEASES

Insects that attack pears are Pear Psylla, Pear Slub, Codling Moth, and Pear Leaf Blister Mite. Diseas are: Fire Blight and Powdery Mildew. For more information on pest control check the "Gardeners Guide to Fruit Tree Sprays" published by the BC 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*