

Planting and Care of Fruit Trees

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Winter is the season of planning. Our attention is drawn to the newly greening trees and we begin to think of our spring gardens. Imagine a crisp, sweet apple or soft, juicy peach ready for the picking. Our location provides us the opportunity to grow fruit varieties not generally found at grocery stores. By picking your fruit when it is ripe, you can enjoy the full flavor that only fruit from your own trees can offer. Commercially grown fruit is most often picked long before it is ready so that it looks ripe by the time it reaches your local grocer. Unfortunately, that means the fruit is lacking in flavor, texture and nutrients.

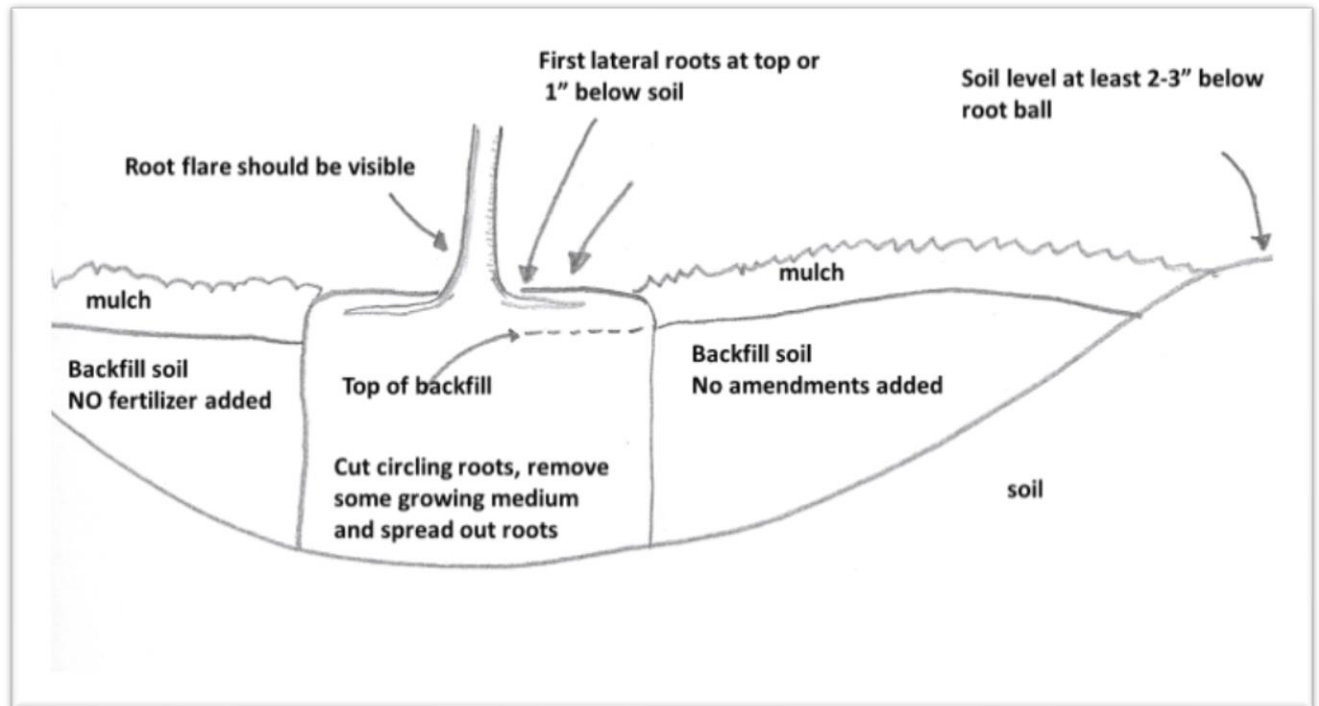
When it comes to planting fruit trees, the importance of the planning stage can never be stressed enough. This includes choosing the best spot for your new planting above ground and below ground. It is recommended that you contact your local utility department before digging to prevent damage to cables, pipes and other underground structures. Start off right to avoid future problems by considering a few key things before planting.

- Site selection should include a soil test. This test will provide information such as soil pH, soil nutrient deficiency and percentage of organic matter. The test is inexpensive and will guide you toward the correct nutrients without too much of a good thing.
- Plant where your fruit trees will receive at least six hours of sun a day during the growing season.
- Plant at least three feet from sidewalks and driveways and six feet away from buildings, as roots will spread wider than the tree crown
- Perform a soil drainage test by digging a hole 12" deep and fill with water. Let the water drain then refill with water. Return to the hole 24 hours later. If the hole is holding water or is full of mud, you must not plant there. Move to another site or use a berm of soil to plant in.
- Before choosing the site, look up. Are there utility lines above or close to the site you've selected? If so, move the site. Trees grow quickly and some reach 15-20' in 5 years.

Now that you've found the right site. You're ready to select the plant. This selection should be based on

- Your level of gardening abilities
- Your favorite fruits
- Your choice of low maintenance or high maintenance plants

When planting, make sure to not plant too deeply. The first lateral roots should be at soil top or 1-2" below the soil. Additionally, make sure you see a flare where the tree trunk meets the soil.



Water well, making sure the root ball and surrounding soil is moist. The amount of water will depend on your soil type and weather conditions, but generally, water 3 times a week for several weeks then move to 2 times per week. After a few more weeks make sure your plant receives at least 1" or about a gallon of water per week. For questions about planting fruit trees visit <https://fbmg.org/ask-a-master-gardener/>.

The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners 2020 Fruit Tree Sale will be held Saturday, February 8, 2020 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds. A preview presentation of the varieties offered at the sale will be held February 1st from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and will cover recommendations for plants adapted to our area, proper planting techniques and care of fruit trees for the first two years. Visit <https://fbmg.org/events/annual-sales/fruit-citrus-tree-sale/> for additional information.