

**Latin Name/Genus:** *Prunus domestica*

Family: *Rosaceae*

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Season:** Warm season

**Exposure:** Full-sun

**Zone:** Hardy to Zone 4 (some cultivars hardy to Zone 2)



**Timing:** Plant young plum trees in late winter or early spring, as soon as the soil can be worked, while tree is dormant; container-grown plum trees can be planted any time of the year, however, grow best when planted in early spring. Water newly-planted trees thoroughly and consistently.

**Starting:** Find a sunny yet sheltered location (at least 6-8 hrs/day), slightly elevated so frost won't settle. Space standard-sized trees 6-7.5m (20-25') apart; dwarf trees can be spaced 3-4.5m (10-15') apart. Dig a hole deep enough that the top of the root ball is level with the top of the dug hole, and twice as wide; loosen roots by hand. Place tree rootball inside hole, filling back in the hole with a some compost mixed in for nutrients; mulch at the base will help keep roots cool, retain moisture, prevent run-off, improves overall soil content, and is a great weed deterrent (recommended: 1/2 cubic yard between 10-12cm deep to a radius of 1m from base for new trees, refreshing mulch regularly and pull away from trunk a bit to avoid rot); water deeply and stake if necessary for the first few years after planting. If planting a grafted tree, ensure union is kept 2.5-5cm (1-2") above the soil line.

**Days to Maturity:** From transplant date.

**Growing:** Ideal pH is between 6.0-6.5 for plum trees, in moist but well-drained loamy soil – plums tend to struggle in clay-heavy soils, or in locations where roots will be constantly wet; water regularly, especially during hot/dry weather; keep soil evenly moist during the first two years during thawed periods. Water when necessary, by checking soil dampness [2.5cm (1") deep] – if damp, defer watering for another day or two. Keep soil moist until the ground freezes. Do not prune plum trees while they are dormant (this could encourage them develop Silver Leaf disease) or in the fall/winter; prune young trees in spring to help shape them as preferred, while more established/mature trees can be pruned in early summer to keep the branches manageable, and to allow fruit to ripen thoroughly. Thinning fruit about a month after blooming stage ends, leaving 2-4" between fruit is recommended.

**Nutrient Preferences:** Mature plum trees benefit from minimal applications of fruit tree fertilizer throughout each growing season, which allow a bit extra nitrogen and potassium for these fruiting trees – plum fruit also appreciate calcium nitrate. Reduce nitrogen in fall to avoid encouraging new growth. Use a balanced fertilizer within the tree's first three years, as phosphorus is important for root development – do not fertilize young trees until they have set a crop.

**Harvest:** Plum trees will begin producing small yield between their third and sixth season, and assuming they meet their 'chilling' requirement, should produce most seasons after they begin. Harvest



## Plum *Plant Care Information*

from late summer into the fall, depending on the variety, weather conditions, etc. Test fruit tenderness by applying gentle pressure on the skin with your fingers; plums should come off the branch easily while cupped in palm with a slight twist of the stem. Japanese varieties can be harvested and allowed to ripen in a cool place, whereas European varieties have the best flavour when left to ripen on the tree. Plums do not store very well – place in refrigerator (31-32°F, relative humidity: 90-95% will allow them to last anywhere from 2-4 weeks), freeze, or dry/dehydrate fruit (prunes) as soon as possible.

**Companion Planting:** Plum trees love being planted alongside alfalfa, beans, cereal grasses, chamomile, chickpeas, chives, comfrey, dill, garlic, lavender, lentils, nasturtiums, onions, peas, peanuts, red clover, rosemary, ryegrass, sage, soybeans, strawberries, wildflowers, and other stonefruit-family trees (apricot, nectarine, peach); avoid growing near peppers, potatoes, raspberries, tomatoes, root vegetables, and walnut trees.