

Latin Name/Genus: *Prunus armeniaca*

Family: *Rosaceae*

Difficulty: Easy

Season: Warm season

Exposure: Full-sun

Zone: Between Zones 4-9



Timing: Plant young apricot trees in autumn or early spring, as soon as the soil can be worked, before new growth begins (prior to bud burst); container-grown apricot 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 location (at least 8 hrs/day), and if growing in a location with other apricot trees or sun-loving plants nearby, ensure tree will be planted 6-7.5m (20-25') [or if a dwarf variety, 1.5-2.5m (5-8')] away from those plants. 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, ensuring any grafting scars are 5-10cm (2-4") above the ground – otherwise the scion can root, which is to be avoided, especially with dwarf varieties. When filling back in the hole, mix a bit of compost 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). If planting a bare root tree (vs. potted sapling), ensure roots are soaked in a bucket of lukewarm water for 2 hours prior to planting; if grown in a windy location, staking is recommended for the first year. While it's not recommended to grow apricots from seed, dwarf varieties can be grown in large containers.

Days to Maturity: From transplant date.

Growing: Ideal pH is between 6.0-7.0 for apricot trees, in loose, rich, well-drained soil; water regularly, especially during hot/dry weather; keep soil evenly moist during the first year during thawed periods; after the first year, irrigate once a week or so, ensuring the soil doesn't dry out 5-7.5cm (2-3") below the surface. Water when necessary, by checking soil dampness [2.5cm (1") deep] – if damp, defer watering for another day or two; if dry provide a deep watering to its base – container-grown trees may require water more frequently. Keep soil moist until the ground freezes. Prune existing trees in early spring when buds start to open but before new leaves emerge, or in last fall (including suckers around base), removing no more than 10-15% of the branches in any given year. Once blossoms are pollinated and fruit is approximately 2.5cm (1") in diameter, thin them down to one fruit every 7.5-10cm (3-4") of branch (dwarf varieties may require more aggressive thinnings). Apricot trees will begin producing small yield in their second or third season (not their first year planted), working towards full yields by their 5th to 7th season.



Apricot *Plant Care Information*

Nutrient Preferences: Apricot trees benefit from minimal applications of fruit tree fertilizers each spring, which allow a somewhat balanced ratio of nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium for healthy trees.

Harvest: The best time to harvest apricots is between June and August, depending on location and variety; once fruits have blushed with pink or red where the sun reaches them, feel firm yet slightly soft, and have a sweet yet tangy taste, all the fruits on that tree are ready for harvest. If fruits are left on the tree until they're soft and aromatically sweet, birds and other animals may try to harvest them first. Apricots tend to ripen in colour, texture, and juiciness post-harvest, however flavour and sugar content will be unaffected. Cup the fruit in the palm of your hand and gently twist off stem to harvest – if it doesn't come off the branch easily, it needs more time to ripen. Store unwashed fruit in a paper bag and leave them in a cool, dry area for 1-3 days until soft and sweet-smelling; can be stored in the refrigerator for 3-5 days. Preserve fresh apricot fruit in the freezer by: peeling them, removing their pits, slicing/cubing them, laying them on a baking sheet (spread out, single-layer), popping them in the freezer overnight, then storing them in a freezer-safe container for up to one year. To dehydrate: preheat oven to 200°F, wash & cut in half, remove pits, use your thumb to turn slices inside out, lay single-layer on baking sheet, place in oven for 8 hours, then let cool prior to bagging/storing in air-tight glass jars; two hours after packaging, if condensation appears in container, dry apricots in oven for another hour until condensation ceases. Dried fruit, if sealed properly and stored in a dry, cool area, can last up to three months, or up to two years stored in the refrigerator.

Companion Planting: Apricot trees appreciate being planted near alliums, asparagus, basil, chives, garlic, grapes, onion, strawberries, sunflowers, wormwood, and any other stonefruit-family trees (nectarines, plums, peaches); avoid growing near peppers, as they are prone to a fungus that can spread infection to apricots.