

Latin Name/Genus: *Pyrus communis*

Family: *Rosaceae*

Difficulty: Easy

Season: Warm season

Exposure: Full-sun

Zone: Hardy to Zone 4



Timing: Plant bare root trees as soon as the soil can be worked (April-May); plant potted trees after threat of frost has passed (May-June). For existing pear trees, prune before growth begins (March), after the coldest weather has passed.

Starting: Dig hole no deeper than root ball and approximately twice as wide; mix with up to 1/3 volume compost, peat moss, etc. as well as existing area soil (fertilizer not required). If planting bare root trees, remove encircling roots or J-shaped roots that could potentially strangle trunk; if planting potted trees, inspect root systems for encircling woody roots, either straighten, if possible, or make several cuts through root ball prior to planting (encourages stronger root system, while preventing the formation of girdling roots which weaken the can). Position tree so graft union (swelling near base of trunk) is 5-10cm (2-4") above soil line to ensure tree grows to its potential; spread roots, remove air pockets while replacing soil, tamping gently and watering thoroughly (if soil settles, add more). Tree guard (from voles, rabbits and deer) and/or stake tree if necessary.

Days to Maturity: From transplant date.

Growing: Ideal pH for pears is 6.0-7.0, in well-drained soil with full sun. Water newly planted tree every week for the first year with a slow sprinkler/irrigation. Overwatering is a threat with pear trees, as roots should not become waterlogged, but should stay moist (check soil dampness, if needed). As pear trees get older, the less watering they require; in dry seasons, provide a deep watering until leaves begin to fall. Observed tree growth should be between 45-60cm (18-24") annually (which signifies enough nitrogen in soil); a 3-4" layer of mulch around the base of fruit trees is recommended to help maintain proper soil temperatures, retain moisture, and prevent weed/grass growth; cut any root suckers that may sprout around base of tree. Prune any limbs/branches lower than 60cm (24") when planting, and allow one leader branch to continue growth; prune unfeathered tree (without strong branches) to about 76cm (30") tall, just above a bud at a 45° angle; if tree is feathered, prune out branches competing with leader, looking weak, or growing at an odd angle (leaving 2-3 strong, well-spaced branches). In regards to established, older pear trees, pruning pear trees is very similar to pruning apple trees (annually, late winter/early spring). Never prune with tree is in bloom and up to two weeks after blooming.

Nutrient Preferences: Pear trees, like all fruit trees, require adequate nitrogen (a bit more than some other Rosaceae-family trees) and potassium, however, too much nitrogen can reduce fruit quality (watch for excessive vegetation and limited fruit production); too much potassium will deplete nitrogen availability too (look for yellow leaves and poor fruit production).



Pear *Plant Care Information*

Harvest: Throughout June and July, picking off the smallest fruit will encourage larger fruit to develop; harvest from August to October. Pears are ready when fruit skin colour lightens in its shade of green, dots on skin turn brown (not all varieties), and the skin develops a smoother, waxy look and feel – avoid letting fruit ripen on the tree (ripen indoors instead); gently lift and twist fruit in palm of hand – do not pull or yank fruit, as this may damage the spur near the stem (ruining next year's flower bud). Briefly refrigerate harvested fruit in a perforated bag or loosely covered container (increasing humidity levels); remove from refrigerator and allow to sit at room temperature for a few days (turning more golden in colour, with the flesh at the stem end yielding to thumb pressure) to fully ripen fruit. Note: Summercrisp variety should be picked while still green with a red blush and not ripened prior to consuming.

Disease & Pests: Too much nitrogen in the soil may result in fast new growth susceptible to fireblight – minimize this by avoiding overfertilization and not letting young shoots grow more than 3' in susceptible varieties; prune any diseased shoots immediately, cutting at least 6" below discoloured bark (then disinfect pruning tools with 1 part water to 3 parts denatured alcohol, or 1 part chlorine bleach to 9 parts water). Keep trees pruned and tree canopy open to allow proper air circulation (to avoid growing bacteria). Japanese beetles can be a nuisance in late June-early July – take a bucket of soapy water to your tree and flick the beetles into the bucket, then dispose of them once dead, repeating process every couple days for a couple of weeks until they are gone. Voles, rabbits, and even deer can destroy bark at the base of the trunk, so take steps to prevent animal-related damage as needed.

Companion Planting: Pear trees like being neighbours with basil, borage, chives, clover, celery, comfrey, dill, garlic, lavender, marigolds, marjoram, mustard, nasturtium, onions, oregano, rosemary, thyme, and sage. Pear trees also don't mind being planted near flowers of the Aster family (ie. Chrysanthemums, African or French marigolds); avoid planting pear trees near black walnut trees, pecan trees, brassicas, raspberries, apple trees, tomatoes, peppers, and other trees in the Rosaceae family if planted too closely.