



Growing Fruit in Containers

If you garden on balconies or don't have room in the garden, fruit grown in containers is a good option. It requires a little more work than growing fruit in the open ground, but it gives you the opportunity to grow at home.

General advice

Choose your varieties carefully, and keep the following in mind:

- Position fruit plants in full sun.
- Water generously but allow the compost's surface to dry out before the next watering, without it becoming bone dry.
- Leave hardy fruit outdoors over winter.
- Peaches and apricots can be covered with a lean-to shelter from autumn to late winter to protect them from rain-splash and potential peach leaf curl.
- To avoid the roots becoming pot bound, re-pot every year or alternate years after leaf fall. Once in its final pot, a plant can be root-pruned every other year with 30 per cent of the compost refreshed. In intervening years, replace the top layer of compost.

What to grow

A wide range of fruit is suitable for container growing. Apples, pears, plums, cherries, blueberries, strawberries, figs, grapes, gooseberries, currants, raspberries - the list is long.

With trees, choose the right rootstock, and choose varieties which are self fertile or, in the case of apples and pears, choose two trees of the same or adjacent-numbered pollination group (1,2,3 or 4).

Apples - choose a dwarfing rootstock - M9 and M26 are good

Pears - Quince C rootstock

Plums, Peach and Nectarine - St Julian A or Pixie rootstock

Cherries - Colt or Gisela rootstock

How to grow

The container should be 45-50cm in diameter, and can be clay, plastic or another lightweight material. Think of where it will be and whether you need to move it.

Fruit can be planted in containers at any time of year.

Use a good quality compost such as John Innes No 3, mixed with up to a third grit or perlite. Some fruit such as blueberries needs acidic, ericaceous, compost.

Feed every 2 weeks with a high potassium liquid feed.