



# PEAR

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### INTRODUCTION

Pears are truly one of the easiest and trouble free fruits the homeowner can grow. One of the few limiting factors of pear growing in the South is fireblight. This bacteria destroys most European varieties of pear, but pears of Oriental descent are resistant. Much effort has been put into breeding varieties that are soft and delicious. We propagate eleven varieties of Oriental pears - eight soft-ripening pears and three hard pears for canning and fresh eating. Recent additions to the pear extravaganza are Asian pears. These pears remain crisp when ripe. The flavor is more subtle, with hints of pineapple and apple. We propagate seven types of Asian pears. A list of varieties and their pollination requirements are at the end of the fact sheet.

### USES IN THE LANDSCAPE

When young, pears are tall green columns. As they mature, the weight of the fruit pulls the branches down, making the tree look like a cascading fountain of fruit. Pears have shiny deep green leaves offering summer shade and are covered with white blossoms in the spring. Mix tall pears with smaller fruits such as blueberries, blackberries, figs and pomegranates. We like them sprinkled through a wilderness area like dogwoods and crabapples. Pears and driveways, driveways of pears.

### PLANTING AND CULTURE

#### SITE SELECTION

Well-drained sandy loam soils are preferred, but pears will grow on many soil types if good drainage is provided. Pears will grow more vigorously and produce more fruit in full sun. Avoid frost pockets - pears may be damaged by unseasonable frosts.

#### SOIL PREPARATION AND PLANTING

Pears prefer slightly acid soil (pH 5.9-6.5). If you are in doubt about the acidity of your soil, take soil a sample to the Cooperative Extension Agent in your county for a soil test.

Dig a planting hole approximately twice as big as the pot and twice as deep. Enrich the planting hole with peat moss, compost or pine bark mixed with soil dug from the hole (50:50 mix). Mushroom compost, added to the planting hole is an excellent amendment for pears.

Remove the pear from the pot, gently loosen the root ball and place in the planting hole. The pear should be planted **at or slightly above** the same level at which it grew in its pot. Fill the hole with the mix of soil and organic matter; gently tamp it in. Water thoroughly to settle the roots and eliminate air pockets. **Do NOT** put fertilizer in the planting hole. Only apply fertilizer if it is the correct time of year (see Fertilization section below).

If desired, construct a water basin around the base of the tree approximately 36 inches in diameter. Mulch in spring and summer with approximately 4-6 inches of mulch. In spring, we suggest a mix of compost and weed-free hay, while in summer use weed-free hay or grass clippings alone.

Spacing for pears depends upon the desired use in the landscape. Trees should be at least 20 feet apart. Place pears requiring cross-pollination no further than 25 feet apart.

## **FERTILIZATION**

We use and recommend the Espoma line of organic fertilizers. Espoma's Citrus Tone is a good choice for pear trees. When not available look for an organic mix that contains an analyst of roughly 5-2-6. Make sure they contain iron, zinc, manganese, magnesium, molybdenum, copper and boron. These minor elements are very important to plants and most soils are low in these elements. Application rates vary according to type and age of plant, so read the instructions on the bag and fertilize accordingly. Be sure to spread the fertilizer evenly under the entire canopy of the plant avoiding a 2-inch area around the trunk. Water or rake in. In Zones 8-10 fertilize 3 times each year in February, May and late July/early August. For plants further north (Zones 6-7), fertilize 2 times each year in March and June/July. Never fertilize after August (July in Zones 6-7) as this will promote new growth when the plant needs to go dormant.

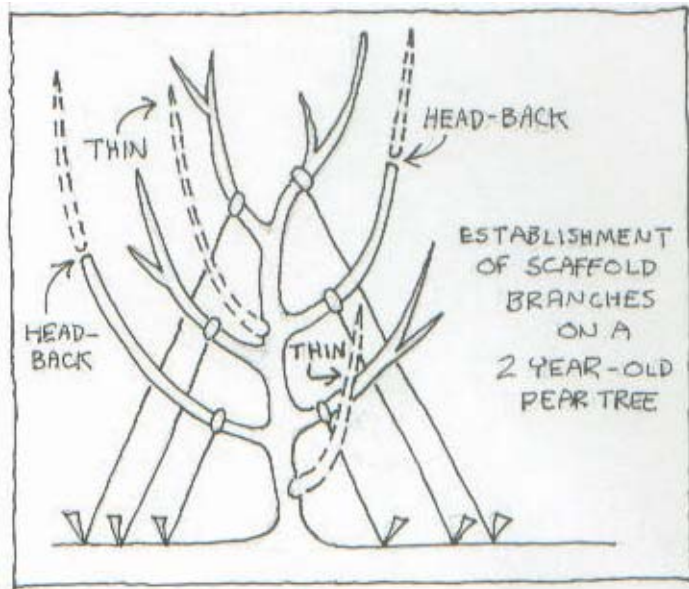
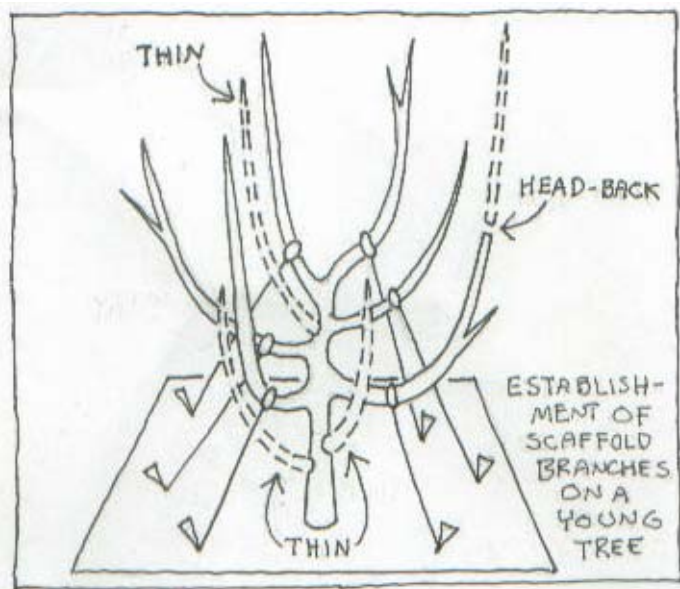
Excess fertilizer or pruning stimulates too much vegetative growth, promoting fireblight. An average of 6 inches of shoot growth on bearing trees is optimal. If trees need to be pruned heavily (as for an older tree that needs rejuvenating), don't fertilize for a year or two.

## **WATER**

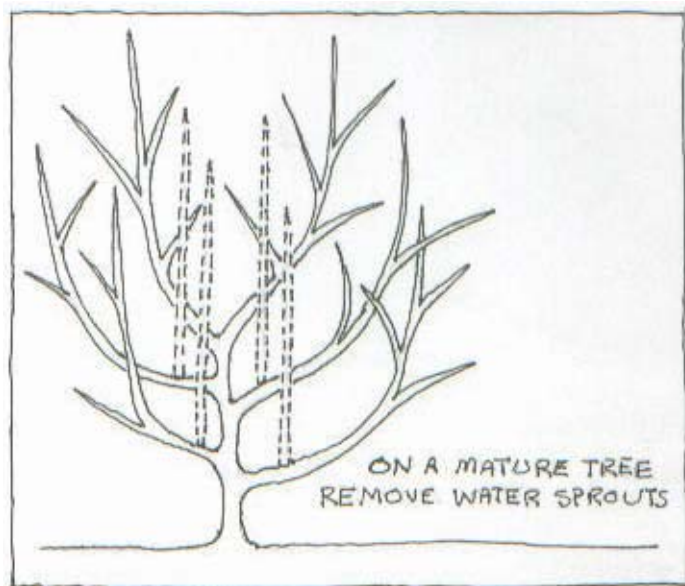
The first year is a critical time for the establishment of a new pear. Water thoroughly twice a week on light soils and once a week on clay soils. Soak the entire root system deeply. Established pears should receive at least 1 inch of water each week. Water regularly, especially during dry periods. Keep an area approximately 4 feet in diameter around the pear clear of grass and weeds to minimize competition for water and nutrients. Mulch this area in spring and summer with 4-6 inches of mulch.

## **PRUNING**

The pear's natural tendency is to grow upright, creating narrow crotches that tend to break under heavy fruit loads. To avoid this, early training is a must. Pegging the tree will insure a form that will bear heavy fruit loads. At planting select 3-4 scaffold branches spaced equally around the trunk and remove other branches flush with the trunk. These scaffold limbs should be pegged down to insure a form that will bear heavy fruit loads. You want the tree to have good air circulation in the interior.



Continue to train pear trees during the first 5 years. Pruning should be designed to train the tree upward and outward by thinning crossing branches and branches that grow in toward the center. The trees can be held in their allotted space by mold and hold cuts, which are devigorating heading cuts made into two year old wood. Do this by topping back the main scaffold limb to a weaker outward growing shoot.



Mature trees are pruned during the dormant season. Thin out branches and head back long shoots as needed to maintain trees height. Remove water sprouts. An unpruned tree will tend to be bushy, lack vigor and to produce small, inferior quality pears. Remove any dead, damaged or diseased branches when pruning. Head trees back with mold and hold cuts to maintain height for ease of picking.

To avoid the spread of fireblight, prune any blackened shoots as they appear. Cut at least eight inches below the area, being careful to sterilize your pruning shears between cuts with a bleach solution to avoid spreading the disease. Collect and burn infected limbs.

## HARVEST

Pick your pears when the background color starts to lighten. Most pear varieties will start to turn a beautiful yellowish gold. Put pears into a brown paper bag to ripen. This will help avoid large grit cells in the ripe fruit.

## **VARIETY LIST: REMEMBER TO CHOOSE TWO PEARS FOR CROSS POLLINATION!**

Early Bloomers (need 2 early bloomers to cross pollinate)

### **SOFT PEAR VARIETIES**

**BALDWIN** A long ripening, dual-purpose variety. Large yellow fruit has a slight red blush, and makes both a fine eating and excellent cooking pear. Ripening over most of the month of August makes this and Golden Boy the best varieties for people who want only one soft pear tree.

**COURTHOUSE** A Just Fruits find! This tough beauty was found growing near the old Wakulla County courthouse. Long-necked, red-blushed pear with a perfect shape and a delicious flavor.

**FLORDAHOME** Sweet, smooth-textured, juicy and flavorful. Ripens late July.

**GOLDEN BOY** We discovered this pear at an old homesite in Wakulla County. Its disease resistance, perfect pear shape, and super sweet flavor enticed us to propagate it. Well worth trying. Ripens early-mid Aug.

**HOOD** Strong grower that bears large golden-yellow fruit. Juicy, buttery-soft flesh is excellent for fresh eating. Ripens late July.

**LECONTE** An old North Carolina variety with a beautiful bell shape and pink-blushed golden color, LeConte has a crisp texture like an Asian pear. Ripens mid to late August.

### **HARD PEAR VARIETIES...**

**PINEAPPLE** This is the old-fashioned pear your Grandmother raised. Tough, hardy and hard to kill. Produces bushels of hard cooking pears.

Late Bloomers (need 2 late bloomers to cross pollinate)

### **SOFT PEAR VARIETIES**

**SUG** A Just Fruits find! This one we named Sug because of the rich, sweet, running-down-your-chin juicy pear that it is! Beautiful thin-necked fruit. Ripens in August.

**TENNS** Last pear to ripen of the season. Thin-necked, with a red cheek. Buttery tender flesh is super sweet. Disease resistant trees.

### **HARD PEAR VARIETIES...**

**CARNES** Called the Apple Pear. Carnes is sweet and crunchy, completely free of grit cells, making it the best hard pear for fresh eating.

**ORIENT** A pear of exceptionally large, almost grapefruit size. Firm and crunchy, a great canning variety. Extremely disease resistant.

## **ASIAN PEAR VARIETIES...**

**20th CENTURY** Yellow with a flat Apple shape. Thin-skinned, tender, slightly tart flesh. Ripens in late August. Semi-self fertile, but better fruit set with CHOJURO, HOSUI or SHINKO.

**CHOJURO** Medium-sized trees with a beautiful weeping or cascading habit. Very productive. Round Apple-shaped fruit with a russet brown skin. Pure white flesh is crispy, mildly sweet and has the distinctive aroma of ripe pineapples. Ripe early August. Pollinate with 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY, HOSUI or SHINKO.

**HOSUI** Golden russet fruit. Thin skinned with a crisp, very juicy flesh. Ripe in late August. Pollinate with 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY, CHOJURO or SHINKO.

**SHINKO** Bronze skinned fruit. Crisp and sweet. Ripens early October. Pollinate with 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY, CHOJURO or HOSUI.

**SHINSEIKI** Beautiful medium-large, yellow pear with sweet mild and juicy flesh. Ripens July. Partially self-fertile but bears better with a pollinator (SHINKO or CHOJURO).

**TSU LI** Large vigorous trees. Reliable bearer in low chill areas. Light yellowish-green skinned fruit has a more European shape than most with a thick neck. The oyster white flesh is firm and juicy. It has a distinct aroma and is sweet, with a slight trace of tartness. Rated as one of the top varieties in respect to flavor and juiciness. Ripens early September. Pollinate with YA LI.

**YA LI** A large, bell-shaped pear with a greenish-yellow skin. Tender white flesh with a sweet-tart flavor. Vigorous, upright grower. Pollinate with TSU LI. Ripens late August to mid Sept.