

JUST FRUITS

AND EXOTICS

PEAR

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 softripening 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 + 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 + 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 three times the width of the pot and at the same depth as the root ball. Set that soil aside and mix it 50/50 with either aged mushroom compost, aged manure, or rotted pine bark & aged manure/compost. Remove the plant from the pot, gently loosen the root ball and place in the planting hole. To avoid burying too deep, make sure plant is positioned with the top most roots at the soil line. Fill the planting 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. Pull mulch a couple of inches away from the trunk for good air circulation. In spring, we suggest a mix of compost and weedfree 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 15 feet apart. Place pears requiring cross-pollination no further than 20 feet apart.

FERTILIZATION

The type of fertilizer you choose may be chemical or organic. Make sure that the fertilizer contains 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 age of plant. See chart below:

Starter Fertilizer & Soil (Apply at Planting)	Fertilizer to Maintain (Apply Early March, Late May, & Late July)
Espoma Bio-tone® Starter Plus Mix Mushroom Compost in Soil	Espoma Tree-tone®

Notes:

- Follow Instructions on Bag for how much to apply each time.
- Months to Fertilize vary based on your zone. Fertilize 3 times per year. We recommend the 1st fertilization starting after the last Freeze of the winter (Late February/Early March in zone 8) & the last Fertilization being no later than August or even June/July in some of the colder zones 7 & below.)
- Fertilizing too late in the year in colder climates will promote new growth, which will be subject to freeze damage.

See our “Planting a Tree Correctly” Guide & Espoma Bio-tone® and Tree-tone® Fact Sheets on our website for more info.

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 – this usually takes 40-50 minutes. Pears should receive at least 1 inch of water each week for best growth and fruit production. Water regularly, especially during dry periods. Fruit may drop prematurely if insufficiently irrigated during dry spells. Keep an area approximately 4 feet in diameter around the pear clear of grass and weeds to minimize competition for water and nutrients.

PRUNING + SHAPING

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.

VARIETIES

A detailed Variety List can be found on our website: justfruitsandexotics.com