

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Nassau County



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Minor Fruit Culture

Minor fruits are plants which produce edible fruits of no real commercial value. They may be eaten fresh, preserved, made into jellies and jams or used for culinary purposes. Most fruits are relatively free of serious insect and disease problems and will grow in a wide range of soil types.



APRICOTS are not grown commercially in New York for a good reason; they are irregular in bearing. A crop two or three out of five years is a good average. The common apricot is a handsome deciduous tree hardier than the peach, but because its flowers open earlier in spring it is more subject to damage by late frosts. The apricot

commences growth early in the season. Soil conditions are often not satisfactory for planting as early in the spring as the apricot should be set. For this reason, fall planting is suggested. Preparation for planting may be the same as for peaches or apples. Pruning during their early years is directed toward establishing a sound framework of well-placed scaffold branches. The apricot is best trained to a modified central leader type of tree work with three or four main scaffold branches spaced six to eight inches apart. If a tree with vigorous branches is planted, the scaffolds may be selected the first spring. From then on, each scaffold should maintain equal growth. Pruning bearing trees is done to encourage the production of fruiting spurs. It consists of an annual thinning out of shoots that threaten to crowd and shortening others to well-placed laterals. An apricot tree in a well-mowed lawn will grow well if adequately fertilized. A complete fertilizer such as 5-10-5 or 10-10-10 can be applied as soon as the ground is workable in the spring. Harvest with care when the color of the fruit indicates ripeness and highest eating quality.

NECTARINES are smooth fruited peaches. Fruits are usually smaller and more richly flavored than peaches. The cultivation of nectarines is the same as for peaches. Planting sites should be open and sunny. Soils lighter than those used for most other fruit trees suit nectarines. Best are deep, fertile, sandy loams that encourage root penetration. Planting may be done in fall in mild climates but is better deferred until early spring where winters are severe. Nectarines carry heavy crops, and if narrow-angled, weak crotches are allowed to develop at branching points, breakage is likely to result from the weight of the crop as well as from storms. Nursery-grown trees are usually 3 to 7 feet tall and somewhat branched. Prune them to a height of 3 feet. Prune the weak branches back to about 1 inch from their bases. The next spring, prune the branches selected as scaffolds lightly, and cut out all weak and crowded lateral shoots that have developed. Repeat this procedure at the third and fourth spring prunings. The chief pruning of trees making adequate growth consists of thinning out the weaker shoots. Use a general purpose balanced fertilizer such as 10-10-10 or 5-10-10. This should be applied in late November, late February or early March.



QUINCE are cultivated chiefly for their edible fruits which, although too harsh to be eaten out of hand, are esteemed for jellies, jams and similar preserves. It is an attractive, slow-growing tree that becomes quite picturesque with age. Quinces respond to sunny locations and well-drained soils. In their early years, prune and train as you would for apples. Little pruning

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is needed later. Excessive cutting is likely to stimulate too vigorous growth, making the plant susceptible to fire blight, the most serious disease of quinces. Ordinarily, the removal of crossing branches and a little thinning is all that is needed. Avoid excessive use of fertilizers that stimulate vigorous, succulent growth. Shoots of this character invite fire blight. Rely instead on mulching with hay or compost. Harvesting must not be done until the fruits are fully mature. When this condition is reached they are wonderfully fragrant. To store, wipe the fruits when dry with a clean cloth and spread them in single layers in a cool, frostproof room or cellar. But do not keep them with other fruits such as apples or pears, or they will impart something of their characteristic odor and flavor to them.

PERSIMMON look somewhat like ripe tomatoes. They have soft, sweet flesh that tends to be astringent before completely ripe. The American persimmon prospers as far north as New England. Its somewhat plumlike fruits, 1/2 inch to 2 inches long, are yellow to orange-brown when ripe. They ordinarily contain one to several large seeds embedded in flesh that, at full maturity, is soft and usually agreeably flavored. To be suitable for eating, the fruits must be dead ripe. Before that they contain tannic acid, which makes them so extremely astringent they make you pucker. American persimmons succeed in almost any fairly good soil if it is not poorly drained or wet, but prefer decidedly fertile earth. Set out young, carefully dug specimens in the fall and prune their tops severely to compensate for loss of roots.

SUGGESTED MINOR FRUIT VARIETIES FOR HOME PLANTING

Apricots	Nectarines	Quince	Persimmon
Alfred	Hardired	Burbank Jumbo	Creegs
Harcot	Harko	Orange	Early Golden
Harglow	Independence	Van Deman	Florence
Hargrand	Morton		Garretson
Harlayne	Nectacrest		Golden Supreme
Harogem	Nectared 1		Hicks
New York 544	Nectared 4		John Hicks
Sundrop	Nectared 6		Juhl
Veecot			Lena
			Maurice Burton
			Mood Indigo