

Wally's Weekly News 13th JUNE 2009
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PLANNING YOUR FRUIT TREES

Recent reports from nurseries and garden centres indicate that there is a big demand for fruit trees this season. This is not surprising as many people have returned to growing their own food crops to save money, become more self-sufficient and to have a better food chain in regards to nutritional values.

Many of you will have booked the fruit trees of your choice and for those that have not as yet I would suggest that you contact your local garden centres to see what is still available.

There is a very good reason for deciduous trees to become available in winter because in the cold months, the trees are dormant and better to lift from their nursery plots and relocated to your gardens and containers.

The trees are normally bagged or held bare rooted in bins of wet sawdust to keep their roots moist.

It can be fatal if one allows the roots of bare rooted trees and roses to dry out.

There are several good reasons to grow as many different types of fruit trees as possible; the fruit gained each year is virtually free (allow for initial outlay and care), grown without harmful chemical sprays and fertilisers in your garden means you are not eating contaminated fruit such as most of the non-organic fruit purchased.

Fruit trees grown with natural products such as animal manure, compost etc will be freer of disease and pests.

Adding to the soil or growing medium minerals from **Ocean Solids** and **Rok Solid** as a yearly dressing, will ensure your fruit has the maximum amount of nutritional value and provide further protection against diseases for both the trees and the fortunate people who consume the fruit.

Often gardeners say to me that they would love to grow a few more fruit trees but do not have the room in the gardens for any more.

There is a very simple way around this problem and that is to grow your fruit trees in larger type containers.

To prove this point I currently have 7 citrus trees, 1 apple, 1 dual plum, 2 avocados, 2 cherimoya, 1 feijoa, 2 grapes, 2 loquats, 1 passion fruit, 1 persimmon, 1 guava, 1 cranberry, 1 blueberry, 1 goji berry, 1 tornless raspberry, 1 pineapple and 1 tamarillo growing in 45 to 100 litre containers.

My section is small and if the above trees were not in containers I would likely need the old quarter acre to bring them to maturity.

(I also have growing in the gardens 1 citrus, 2 stone fruit, 1 plum, 1 pear, 1 persimmon, 1 tamarillo, 1 grape and a feijoa.)

These are all 5 to 10 times the size of my container specimens.

The big advantage with container grown fruit is you can move them around, take them with you if you move house and they do not get too big as the container restricts their root size.

The disadvantages are they take a bit longer to produce when compared to open grown specimens and you do need to root prune them every few years.

Plastic rubbish tins come in various sizes and these are ideal and reasonably priced; with

a few drainage holes drilled in the sides just up from the base. Some of my potted fruit trees have 4cm holes drilled in the base so that some of their roots can venture into the soil or lawn that they are sitting on.

If you can find a place that has used 200 litre plastic drums for sale or free then these drums cut in half make excellent containers for growing fruit trees in.

I use the same drums cut into two halves lengthways for growing vegetables in.

If you are going to grow fruit trees or other plants in containers then don't use any kind of potting mix, instead make up a mix of compost with about 10% clean top soil or worm casts mixed through.

The reason for this is you are bringing the soil life into the mix making for a more natural growing medium. I always add a few worms to the mix as they will keep the soil/compost more open and prevent it from compacting over time.

For additional food I use old fowl manure placed on the top of the mix along with a sprinkling of **Fruit and Flower Power** (the later applied once a month during the flowering to harvesting period)

A yearly application of **Ocean Solids** and **Rok Solid** for the extra minerals along with a drench plus spray of **Magic Botanic Liquid** with **Mycorrcin** every so often.

If any of the trees get attacked from insect pests then a spray of **Neem Tree Oil** takes care of them safely. **Liquid Copper** is also another handy spray to control various disease problems such as citrus tree diseases, bladder plum and curly leaf. The same copper is also ideal for pear slug control.

The worst problem with fruit is the birds getting into a crop when the fruit is coming towards maturity.

A few lengths of **Bird Repeller Ribbon** takes care of this at that crucial time.

A couple of winters ago I purchased another Unique Feijoa tree and placed it into a 45 litre container.

During the ensuing months it grew quickly to about 3 times the original potted height and has produced over a dozen large fruit the first year and a nice small crop this last season.

About the same time I had a tamarillo seedling so I potted it into a 45 litre container also and over the last 24 months it has quickly grown to just on 2 metres tall and by placing the container under the eaves along with a spray recently of **Vaporgard Frost Protector**, it should not be harmed this winter by frosts.

It is bearing a nice crop at this time.

Existing fruit trees can be pruned at this time but do not prune on a cool moist day as this can allow Silverleaf disease to enter the wounds. (Do not prune passion fruit vines in the winter, they should only be pruned when they are actively growing in the spring.)

A spray of **Liquid Copper** and **Raingard** over any of your fruiting trees or vines would not go astray at this time.

Deciduous trees do not need any feeding while dormant but when the buds start to swell in the spring a good layer of rich compost can be applied along with **Fruit and Flower Power**.

If you have existing container planted fruit trees that have been in their pots for 2 or more years, then winter is a good time to lift them and cut the bottom one third of the roots off with a cross saw.

Place fresh compost in the base of the pot to the depth of the amount of roots removed

and simply pop the tree back into its pot.

This action should be taken about every two years but in some cases an annual root prune will help produce a bigger and better crop.

If you wish to add a fruit tree or two to your collection then do not delay in placing an order at your garden centre.

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