

Pear Tree Planting and Care Guide



Planting Guide

1. Pear trees usually require at least one pollinator tree of a different variety to produce fruit. Bartlett Pears are an exception - they will produce fruit without a pollinator tree but will produce more with a pollinator tree nearby.
2. Choose the best site:
 - Sun: Full sun (at least 8 hours per day)
 - Soil: Well drained soil; soil slightly acidic with pH between 6 and 7. Do not plant in areas that develop standing water after rainfall.
 - Spacing: Plant semi-dwarf pear trees at least 15-20 feet apart from each other and 15-20 feet away from other trees and structures. Plant within 100 feet of a pollinator tree.
3. Dig a hole no deeper than the root system and twice as wide.
4. Mix compost/peat moss/other organic material into the removed dirt, up to $\frac{1}{3}$ by volume. You don't need to add fertilizer to the hole.
5. Examine the tree roots - if you see woody roots wrapped in a circle, straighten them or make several cuts into the root ball before you plant.
6. Position the pear tree in the hole. Identify the graft union (slight bend/bulge towards the base of the tree where the variety was grafted onto rootstock.) Make sure the graft union is 2-4 inches above the soil line. You'll need another person to make sure the tree stands straight up.
7. Backfill the hole, tamping down to remove air pockets as you replace the soil.
8. Once the hole is filled, tamp down gently, then water the tree thoroughly to remove any more air pockets. If the soil settles a couple of inches after watering, add more soil and pack it down.
9. Stake/support the tree by pounding the stake(s) at least 2 feet into the ground. Attach the tree to the stake(s) with tree ties or another wide, non-abrasive material. Don't use wire or twine because they can damage the bark.
10. Optional: apply a few inches of mulch up to a 3 foot radius around the base of the tree, keeping the mulch at least 4 inches away from the trunk. Mulch can help maintain soil moisture and reduce weeds.
11. Optional: Install a tree guard (found online and at nurseries). Tree guards help protect young trees from winter damage and small animals chewing on their bark. Once the tree has flaky, mature bark, tree guards are no longer needed. You may want to add a ring of fencing, especially in winter, if deer are a problem.

Caring for Your Pear Tree

- **Watering:** Water weekly during the growing season (approx. May-October), especially the first year if there hasn't been much rain. Slow sprinklers or other slow soaking methods work best. Use a trowel to make sure the soil is damp several inches down after watering or rain. You are aiming for roots that are moist without being waterlogged. As the tree roots grow deeper, the tree will probably require less watering.
- **Weeding:** Remove grass and weeds from a 3 foot circle around your tree and cut away any root suckers that sprout at the tree base. A layer of mulch will reduce the amount of weeding required. See step 10 above.
- **Support:** Keep your tree staked or otherwise supported for its first 2 years in the ground. See step 8 above.
- **Protect:** To help prevent animal and winter damage, use a tree guard and a ring of fencing if needed. See step 11 above. To help prevent disease and pest problems, keep the area around your pear tree free of debris, fallen fruit and leaves, pruned branches, and weeds.
- **Harvesting Pears:** Harvest most pears when they turn from dark green to a lighter green. They will not be ripe yet! Gently lift and twist in a smooth motion to pick a pear, or hold the small, woody spur attached to the stem and lift-twist the pear. The spur has next year's buds, so don't damage or remove it. As soon as possible, refrigerate harvested pears in a perforated plastic bag or loosely covered container to increase humidity around the fruit. To fully ripen a pear, let it sit at room temperature for several days, until it is a more golden color and the stem end flesh yields to thumb pressure.
Exception: Harvest Summercrisp pears when they are green with a red blush. Eat or store right away - don't ripen them like other pears.
- **Pruning:** Fruit trees should be pruned in late winter/early spring after the worst of the cold but before growing begins. The goal of pruning is to give the tree well spaced branches, a balanced appearance, and to remove broken, diseased, and dead branches. The University of Minnesota Extension has a pear tree pruning guide [here](#).
- **Maintenance:** If your pear tree grows 18-24 inches of new growth per year, the nitrogen levels in your soil are sufficient. If growth is slower than that, add compost around the tree base to boost nitrogen in the soil. Pear trees generally don't need fertilizer.

Adapted from [University of MN Extension "Growing Pears in the Home Garden"](#). Click the link for more detailed information.