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Growing Apricot Tree #F7

Steps for Success!



Apricot trees are one of the earlier producing fruit trees and, because they are self-pollinating, meaning they do not need more than one tree to bear fruit, they can be grown in a small yard. Pink or white flowers bloom in early spring, followed by fruit in May, with a standard size tree producing three to four bushels of fruit yearly. Apricot trees do not begin producing fruit until the third to fourth year after planting, but you can get started with a few relatively easy steps for growing your tree.

Insect and Disease Control (VERY IMPORTANT) – *always read chemical labels and follow manufacturer's directions carefully to avoid injury to your tree, the environment or yourself.* Apricot trees are highly susceptible to disease and insect infestations, so spraying is extremely important. Many fruit trees die from pests that could have been controlled with proper spraying.

To control brown rot, scab, fruit spot and black spot, apricot trees should be sprayed with

#1 Copper Fungicide in the dormant season (early spring) before leaf buds open. Always follow manufacturer's directions. Use ¼ to ½ gal. per tree. If these insects or diseases are not present, do not spray at this time. To control Brown Rot, spray with **#2 Daconil** or Fung-onil just before blooms open and when blooms are 90% open. These products are fungicides and will not harm pollinating bees. To control fruit flies, mites, worms, scab and brown rot, spray with **#3 Orchard Tree Spray**. 1. When flower petals have fallen. 2. 7 days later. 3. Every 10-14 days after that. Stop 1 week before harvest (early Aug.). Never spray pesticides when trees are in bloom as this will kill the pollinating honeybees. Apply one last **#1 Dormant Oil** spray to the tree in late fall after most leaves have dropped. Avoid spraying during freezing temps.

Good sanitation practices are necessary to control pest problems. Cut out all dead or diseased wood and disinfect pruning tools with a household disinfectant (Lysol or bleach). Pick up all fruit that has fallen to reduce insects.

Pruning Apricot Trees First year pruning sets the eventual shape of the tree. If your tree is taller than 4-5' above ground, after its planted, trim it down to that height removing the central leader. Thin out the inward growing branches and any branches which are crossing over each other. Trim off the tips of the larger branches to encourage growth.

Unlike apples and pears, you are not trying to create a central leader (dominant vertical branch). Apricots are trained to an open, spreading, vase-like shape. See the illustration below for a before and after look at the branches of a young apricot tree. Take out at least half of the new, lateral shoots to do this. The remainder of those shoots will produce your fruit for this year.

Apricots are small and they do not fill the tree, so fruit thinning is unnecessary. Besides, late frosts may do the job for you. In later years, you should continue "shape" your tree. Apricot trees are best trained to a spreading, open, vase-like shape. It does not want to grow straight up like an apple or a pear, so the central leader will become much less dominant. It will want to spread and try to take over your orchard. This is the natural way your apricot tree will want to grow. Pruning will keep your tree vigorous, encourage the establishment of fruit buds and enable you to keep your tree down to a manageable size. The best time to prune apricots is in the early spring. Try pruning after the last frost date for your area. At this time, most of the winter damage can be trimmed off and you will minimize the effect of late frost damage to your buds and blooms.

