



CHOOSING FRUIT TREES

Before buying your fruit trees knowing a bit what you are looking for can make all the difference for the success of your trees or orchard. Most fruit trees are grafted which means root of the tree (root stock) is one variety of tree and the top is one variety of fruit.

Rootstock

**Apples:

These are usually given a number as they have been chosen from many trial trees for their health, size and vigour. This lets you know roughly how tall your tree will be when fully grown, what type of soils it is suitable for and if it will protect your tree from certain 'root' based diseases.

Standard Size: (full size) trees grow over six metres, they fruit after 5-6 years, and will have big crops for 150+ years - they are not often used now because of their large size.

The common apple rootstock you find in NZ :

Semi Dwarf: (Medium size) only need staking for first year if they are in a very windy situation. These grow around 4 metres high and wide in Southland and fruits after 3-4 years and for 80+ years

MM 106 suitable for most soils but likes moist fertile loam but must be free draining, resistant to woolly aphid but not collar rot. 3-4 metres

M793 suitable for most soils but prefers clay soils resistant to woolly aphid and collar rot slightly larger tree than 106 4 + metres

M116 is a new rootstock being trialled in NZ that is more resistant to mildew as well as being resistant to woolly aphid and collar rot. Around 4 metres.

Dwarf : (small size) around 2 metres high- need permanent staking. Fruit after 1-2 years , less fruit as it is a small tree , live for around 30 years.

M26 Need free draining soil. These tend to be smaller in Southland use when you really only want a small tree 1-1.5 metres

(Note dwarfing **M9** is not cold hardy and is very small - not suitable for Southland unless very sunny sheltered spot)

**Other fruit trees:

Pears: Some can be grafted on to quince root for a smaller tree or pear root stock for a larger tree- sometimes they need an intermediate graft - with a very compatible pear linking the roots and the variety pear that you want (which itself wont match well with quince stock).

Plums can be grafted but some are fine grown as cuttings- as long as the variety naturally grows healthy and in the size you would like.

Tree varieties

These are the 'tops' chosen for the fruit variety and it is important when you want to grow organically to choose disease resistant ones or tried and true old home orchard favourites. Commercial fruit that you usually see in supermarkets tend to require a spray regime and usually disappoint the home grower.

Ask the old people in your area what fruit trees and which names they remember growing in your region when they were young- In Southland apricot orchards were very common and they fruited well- however as apricot trees do not live as long as pip fruit there are no remnants left to remind us.

Find out if there are any younger orchards in your area and find out which ones are fruiting well. We can grow feijoas, figs, outdoor grapes and Meyer lemons in sunny sheltered spots in some parts of Southland.

Find out where the fruit variety originated from- Apple trees from Great Britain usually suit Southland conditions along with other countries with a similar climate.

Think what fruit you like to eat and how. Fruit could be for cooking, eating, juicing or cider or any combination of those. So you may wish to get an apple that is good for cooking and eating or a pear that is good for eating and juice , etc .depending on your needs.

If you want lots of fruit you may want to get for example a cooking apple and eating apple for each season. Two early, two mid and two late season trees.

A rough guide to Apple seasons:

Very Early..... January/February

Early..... February /March

Early to Mid March / April

Mid April /May

Mid to Late..... May /June

Late..... June/ July

Very Late..... July/August

Some fruit are biannual which means they have a massive crop every second year- you can often encourage them to be annual by thinning the fruit when they are tiny so they do not over produce.

Pollination

Self Pollinating: these are fruit trees that will have fruit even if they are the only tree for miles. Good ones to choose if you only want one of each type of fruit tree.

Partially Self Pollinating: these have some fruit naturally but do better with a pollinator

Need Pollinator: these need another fruit tree of its kind that flowers at the same time in order to bear fruit. For example *Greengage* and *Coe's Golden Drop* plums are a good pollinating partnership. Two early apples will act as pollinators for each other and will often also pollinate an 'early to mid ' season apple etc.

Triploid Apples: these will be pollinated by one other apple tree of its flowering season (early, mid or late) but it will not give any out so the other apple will bear no fruit- so with triploid apple you will need three of the same season then all three will fruit.

You can get **double grafted** trees from nurseries that cost a bit more but often have the pollinating pair on the same tree. This can be good as long as they are of the same vitality- otherwise the dominant one tends to sap all the goodness from the roots and eventually starve the other one out.

If you have lots of other fruit trees of the type you want within a couple of kilometres from where you live you don't have to worry about pollinators so much- if not ...just convince all your neighbours to put in a couple of fruit trees as well!