

## Fact Sheet



# Apricots & Cherries

### Apricots

Apricots originated in the regions of East Asia and we sell more apricot trees than any other fruit.

Apricots prefer a climate that has cool winters and warm dry summers and do exceptionally well in southern areas of Tasmania where spring is usually relatively dry at a time when fruit is forming.

Plant trees in well drained soil in a sunny position protected from prevailing winds, as apricot branches tend to be very brittle.

Prior to planting, dig in blood and bone with added lime, and as trees grow quite large, plant about 5-6 metres apart. When purchased bare rooted at your local nursery, ensure trees are pruned and cuts are sealed.

Eventually they should be trained to a V shape with an open centre to encourage air circulation. Fertilise with high nitrogen feed (such as Gro Plus Citrus Food) twice yearly, half post harvest and half in early spring. Alternatively reasonable quantities of animal manure can be used.

Apricots flower early in spring so if you live in areas where late frosts occur choose varieties that will be suitable for your area. Consult your nursery person if you need assistance.

Fruit is borne mainly on 2-3 year old wood, at the base of previous years' growth. These fruit spurs will eventually form on the older wood and produce for years. Vigorous new shoots near the top should be removed, side shoots left for 3-4 years, then thinned.

Trees should be pruned in autumn after harvest as this minimizes infection and bacterial canker, whilst still in active growth trees are able to resist infection more vigorously. They will set heaps of fruit and heavy thinning is necessary though usually nature will assist as the tree will naturally drop lots of cherry sized fruit.

Apricots may be espaliered, though this is rather difficult due to it's brittleness.

Fruit is ripe about a week after swelling has stopped and full orange colour is attained.

If picking for storage or jam, do so while fruit is firm, if picking to eat wait until fruit is slightly soft.

In Tasmania few problems with pests occur except with earwigs, wasps and birds as fruit matures.

Apricots do suffer from several disease problems:



**1. Brown Rot**

Spray with Mancozeb at blossom time, remove mummified fruit and twigs in winter.

**2. Gummosis**

Spray with Copper Oxychloride in winter. Paint wounds with bordeaux paste. Remove prunings, mummified fruit and twigs.

**3. Shothole**

Spray with white oil or Bordeaux, improve air circulation and prune off infected wood.

Apricots are self fertile, apart from newer varieties Rival and Goldrich.

**Varieties:**



***Moorpark***

By far the most popular variety in Southern Tasmania. Best flavour, ripens late January/February. Large fruit.

***Trevatt***

Commercial variety, ripens evenly. Matures Jan/Feb.

***Tilton***

Large fruit, suits cooler areas, ripens February.

## **Cherries**

Cherries prefer a cool temperate climate, though low rainfall during fruiting season is imperative or else fruit splitting will occur. They enjoy cold winters and frosts rarely pose any problems.

Plant trees in a sunny well drained position into soil prepared with one kilo of blood and bone. If site is too wet the roots will rot so either ensure drainage is adequate or else mound the tree. Cherries also make wonderful specimen trees with a lovely flowering and attractive autumn colour.

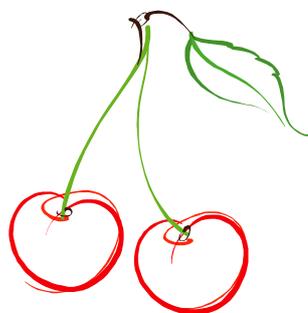
Once planted ensure they are well watered in autumn and summer or else flower development for the following season may be affected.

Cherries are vigorous multi branched trees so should be planted about 6 metres apart. Fertilise with a complete fertiliser (Dynamic Lifter or Gro Plus Fruit & Citrus Food) about 1kg for young trees to 2-3kgs for older trees.

When pruning aim for a V shape, when young the trees will often have 2 strong long branches, these should be cut back to about 50cm in length. After 3 years you should have about a dozen branches formed, these will provide the basis of a productive tree, thereafter little pruning is necessary apart from removing broken and crowded branches.

Cherries fruit at the ends of short spurs which produce loads of flowers each year. Pruning should take place after harvest. All cherry pruning cuts should be sealed (we recommend Steriprune) to prevent bacterial infection.

Cherries make very effective espalier subjects. Fruit thinning is generally not necessary. Harvest fruit when it is fully coloured and sweet but firm. Pick with stalk intact to avoid tearing skin of fruit, picking by twisting motion so that buds remain undamaged for following season.



### Pest problems

- (i) **Birds** - control with either netting or bird scarers.
- (ii) **Aphids** - use pyrethrum based spray.
- (iii) **Pear & Cherry Slug** - spray with Carbaryl or dust trees (if small enough) with talcum powder, wood ash or vacuum cleaner dust.

Disease problems as per Apricots.

Cherries generally need a pollinator except for varieties Stella & Sunburst.

### Varieties:

(Later maturing types tend to have larger fruit).

#### **Stella**

Self fertile. Large dark firm fruit. Sweet and juicy. Matures December. Also available on dwarfing rootstock. Pollinates all other varieties.

#### **Blackboy**

Large dark juicy fruit. Matures late December.

*Pollinators:* Stella, St. Margaret, William's Favourite.

#### **Napoleon**

White fleshed fruit also used for crystallizing. Matures December.

*Pollinators:* Stella, Blackboy, William's Favourite.

#### **Lapin**

Self fertile, large blackheart and one of the main picking varieties

