

You want to establish fruit trees or berry shrubs with confidence, knowing that years later mature plants will provide high yields, resist diseases and thrive in the Midwest climate.

Growing Ease

The ease of growing fruits organically depends upon several factors. Select and place plants so they...

- **Easily survive Midwest winters.** Ensure the plants thrive in hardiness zone 5.
- **Are resistant to diseases and pests.** Look for varieties that are bred for disease resistance or select Midwest native plants which are naturally resistant.
- **Have optimal sun and water.** Most plants will yield more in full sun and with consistent soil moisture. Ensure plants have 6+ hours of direct sunlight each day and water plants if the soil feels dry 1 inch from the surface.
- **Are planted in deep, well-drained soil.** The majority of tree and shrub roots are in the top 18 inches of soil; the ideal depth of friable, loamy soil is 3½ feet. They will not thrive in dense clay and widespread soil preparation may be needed before planting.
- **Are spaced appropriately** so they overlap very little at maturity. Overcrowded plants compete for sun, nutrients and water which can lower yields and invite disease. Dwarf fruit trees are likely appropriate for residential yards.
- **Receive desired nutrients** through compost, woodchip mulch and companion plants.
- **Are protected from wind.** Most plants will have higher yields if they are not constantly subjected to strong winds.
- **Are heavily pollinated** by insects. Include patches of pollinator habitat within or near fruits to maximize fruit set. Most apples, pears and plums must be pollinated by another variety to maximize yields; two trees may be required.
- **Are protected from critters.** Trunk protectors and fencing may be required to thwart hungry rabbits and deer, especially in wintertime.



Most all children can't resist picking the shiny string of pear-like **red currants**.



Sweet **beach plums** are easy to harvest.



The **Korean bush cherry** produces loads of sour fruit that is easy to reach.



A mature **elderberry** yields enough food to share with hungry birds.

Harvesting and Taste Preferences

The more you enjoy harvesting and eating your fruit, the more likely you will be to care for the plants. Select plants so they match your...

- **Harvesting preferences.** Consider the mature height of plants if children will help with the harvest or you don't want to use ladders or harvesting tools.
- **Harvesting times.** When will you have time to harvest, prepare and store your fruit?
- **Palate.** It won't matter how much a plant yields if you don't like the taste of the fruit. When possible, try to sample specific varieties before making a selection.

Good Companion Plants

Nearby plants can grow additional food, attract pollinators, encourage pest predators, accumulate nutrients, develop loamy soil and conserve soil moisture. Interplanting these plants near or around fruit trees and berry bushes will enhance growth and yields.

- **Rhubarb.** Plant rhubarb 3-4 feet away from the base of fruit trees and berry bushes to help shade out weeds and provide sour stalks for your dessert.
- **Chives.** Both garlic and onion chives accumulate nutrients, support pollinators and provide tasty food.
- **Dutch white clover.** This familiar, drought-tolerant, clumping groundcover provides nitrogen to nearby plants, supports pollinators and makes a nutritious tea.
- **Wild strawberry.** This Midwest native creeping groundcover rapidly fills in bare spots to conserve soil moisture.
- **Creeping thyme.** This tasty clumping groundcover is beloved by insects and Italian recipes.

Please feel free to grow blueberries, chestnuts, hazelnuts, maypops, quince and others with higher maintenance or harvesting requirements, but plan to give them more attention than plants listed in this publication.

Top Fruit Plants

These perennial plants grow well in the Midwest. Varieties were selected for taste, high yields and disease resistance.

Common Name	Top Varieties	Height	Width	Light	Water	Pampering Need	Harvest Ease	Harvest Time	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
TREES															
Apple, Dwarf	Gold Rush, Crimson Crisp, Liberty, Enterprise, Jonafree, Williams, Pride	5-12'	5-12'	Full Sun	Mesic	2-Easy	3-Moderate								
Cherry, Sour Dwarf	Montmorency, Meteor, Surefire, North Star	8-10'	8-10'	Full Sun	Mesic	1-Very Easy	3-Moderate								
Peach, Dwarf	Redhaven (semi-freestone), Reliance, Contender	12-15'	12-15'	Full Sun	Mesic	2-Easy	3-Moderate								
Pear, European Dwarf	Harrow Delight, Moonglow, Warren, Seckel	8-15'	8-15'	Full Sun	Mesic	2-Easy	3-Moderate								
Plum, European Dwarf	Mount Royal, Stanley, Waneta, Toka/Bubblegum	10-12'	10-15'	Full Sun	Mesic	2-Easy	3-Moderate								
SHRUBS															
Aronia Berry, Black	Nero, Viking	5-7'	5-6'	Full Sun - Part Shade	Mesic - Hydric	1-Very Easy	2-Easy								
Beach Plum	Ecos	10'	10'	Full Sun	Mesic	2-Easy	2-Easy								
Cherry, Korean Bush	Joy (self-fertile, 4'), Joel (needs pollinator, 4'), Jan (needs pollinator, 3')	4'	4'	Full Sun	Mesic	1-Very Easy	2-Easy								
Cherry, Sour Dwarf Bush	Carmine Jewel, Juliet	6-8'	6-8'	Full Sun	Mesic	1-Very Easy	2-Easy								
Currant, Black	Ben Sarek, Blackdown, Goliath	3-5'	4-5'	Full Sun - Part Shade	Mesic	2-Easy	3-Moderate								
Currant, Clove	Crandall	3-7'	3-5'	Full Sun - Part Shade	Xeric - Mesic	2-Easy	3-Moderate								
Currant, Red	Pink Champagne, Red Lake	3-5'	4-5'	Full Sun - Part Shade	Mesic	1-Very Easy	1-Very Easy								
Elderberry	York, Nova, Adams	5-12'	5-12'	Full Sun - Part Shade	Mesic - Hydric	1-Very Easy	3-Moderate								
Gooseberry	Poorman, Invicta, Hinnomaki Red	3-5'	3-5'	Full Sun - Part Shade	Xeric - Mesic	1-Very Easy	3-Moderate								
Jostaberry	Jostaki, Jostagranda	4-8'	4-8'	Full Sun - Part Shade	Xeric - Mesic	2-Easy	3-Moderate								
Nanking Cherry		6-10'	6-10'	Full Sun	Xeric - Mesic	2-Easy	3-Moderate								
Raspberry	Summer-bearing: Killarney, Taylor, Titan (thornless) Fall-bearing: Caroline, Heritage, Autumn Bliss	4-6'	Indef.	Full Sun	Mesic	2-Easy	3-Moderate								
Serviceberry	Northline, Nelson, Martin, Thiessen, Honeywood, Smokey, Regent (5')	5-15'	5-15'	Full Sun	Mesic	1-Very Easy	3-Moderate								
OTHERS															
Grape, Fox	Reliance (seedless), Edelweiss (seeded)	15-20'	15-20'	Full Sun	Xeric - Mesic	2-Easy	1-Very Easy								
Strawberry	Everbearing: Tristar, Earlglow Junebearing: Surecrop	6-12"	Indef.	Full Sun	Mesic	3-Moderate	3-Moderate								

Pampering Need

After planting, careful watering and monitoring for 4-8 weeks is needed for all perennials. This scale will help you determine how much attention is required after establishment.

1-Very Easy

Many Midwest native plants near this "plant-it-and-forget-it" scale.

2-Easy

In addition to wintertime pruning, monthly pest checks and disease monitoring will ensure the plant thrives. Tree branches may require trellising and manipulation 4-6 times each year to maximize yields.

3-Moderate

If planted in a preferred location, most disease-resistant fruits care for themselves after establishment.

Harvest Ease

Reaching through foliage to harvest yummy fruit can require a fair amount of work. Even dwarf fruit trees may require a low ladder or harvesting tool.

1-Very Easy

Fruit is low, clumped and easily accessed. If often ripens within a 2-3 week period.

2-Easy

Fruit ripens uniformly, but it is dispersed throughout the plant which increases harvesting time.

3-Moderate

Fruit is out of reach, dispersed throughout the plant, or buried in dense or prickly foliage. It may ripen over an extended period.