

# Bare Root Fruit Tree Planting & Care Guide for Boise and Treasure Valley Gardens

*A local gardening guide from Five Mile Farm & Greenhouses  
Boise, Idaho*

Bare root fruit trees are an excellent way to start or expand a backyard orchard in Boise and throughout the Treasure Valley. Proper planting, watering and early care are essential for establishing healthy trees that will produce fruit for many years.

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## **BEFORE PLANTING**

Once you get your bare root fruit tree home, it is critical that you do not let the roots dry out. It is ideal to plant the tree within a day of purchasing it. If you're not able to plant your tree right away, we recommend covering the roots with moist leaves, soil, or wood chips. The roots should be fully covered and kept moist until ready to plant.

Just before planting time, soak the roots in a container of water for at least 3 hours (but not more than 24 hours).

## **PLANTING**

Choose a site that receives **as much sun as possible**. Dig a hole **twice as wide as the root system and only as deep as the roots themselves**—it's critical that fruit trees are **not planted too deeply**.

Position the tree so the **root flare** (where the main roots meet the trunk) sits **at or slightly above soil level**. The **graft union should remain a few inches above the soil surface** to prevent rot and to avoid shoots developing from the rootstock that may not have the desired fruiting characteristics.

When backfilling around the roots, it is best to use **the native soil removed from the hole** rather than adding other soil mixes. This encourages the roots to establish more easily in the surrounding soil. Although not required, you may sprinkle a small amount of fertilizer containing **mycorrhizae**—such as *Down to Earth Bio-Live*—into the planting hole to support early root development.

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Five Mile Farm & Greenhouses  
Boise's Local Garden Center Since 1983  
2940 S Five Mile Rd | Boise, Idaho



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After backfilling, **gently firm the soil around the roots** and make sure the tree is standing straight. **Staking the tree during the first year** can help keep it upright while the roots establish.

Finally, apply a **couple inches of compost over the soil surface at planting time**, and continue adding compost annually to improve soil health. Be sure to **keep compost a few inches away from the trunk** to help prevent crown rot.

## **WATERING**

Immediately after planting, slowly and thoroughly soak the soil deeply, allow the water to fully absorb, and repeat once more.

It is very important to always water your fruit tree thoroughly and deeply less often, rather than simply sprinkling the surface frequently. This will encourage all of your new tree's roots to search for water more deeply, therefore needing less supplemental water in the long run. However, as your new bare root tree doesn't have a large established root system yet, it's important to water more frequently in the first year. Slowly applying roughly 5 gallons of water once a week is a good rule of thumb but adjust based on the weather. The soil around the tree should be moist, but not wet.

## **PRUNING**

Your new bare root fruit tree has been pruned at the nursery and shouldn't need additional pruning in its first season. In subsequent years fruit trees should be pruned while dormant in late January, February or early March. When pruning, keep the following in mind:

- Remove dead, diseased and damaged branches.
- Remove branches that are pointing upwards or towards the center of the tree.
- Remove any branches that are crossing or rubbing against others
- "Heading" cuts should be performed to shorten the branches from last year's growth. This will ensure heavy fruit does not weigh down and break branches.
- You can "top" the tree to control the height to whatever suits your situation best.

## **FERTILIZING**

Right before bud break is the perfect time to fertilize fruit trees. If you miss the opportunity, you can still fertilize any time through June. Do not fertilize in late summer or fall as new growth stimulated by the fertilizer can be damaged by frost. A fertilizer such as Down to Earth Fruit Tree is recommended.

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## **PEST CONTROL**

Applying a dormant oil prior to the tree breaking dormancy (aka bud break) is a good way to kill overwintering insects or eggs that could become a nuisance during the growing season. Copper fungicide can also be an effective means of preventing bacterial and fungal issues such as leaf curl on peaches. Apply copper fungicide at least 24 hours prior to applying a dormant oil.

## **GUARANTEE**

Following the instructions in this guide should get your new fruit tree growing on the right foot! Please keep in mind that it can take up to six weeks before a bare root tree breaks dormancy. If in doubt whether your tree is still alive after at least this much time has passed, gently scratch the bark on the trunk about halfway up the tree with a fingernail or knife. If there is a greenish hue then good news, your tree is still alive! If it is dry, brown and brittle then your tree may not have survived. If your new tree does not break dormancy during its first growing season, Five Mile Farm will provide a money back guarantee ***provided that you promise to have followed the directions in this guide.***

## **Additional Questions?**

You can always give Five Mile Farm a call and we will do our best to answer any questions you may have. Or for additional fruit tree care information, visit the Dave Wilson Nursery website or the University of Idaho Extension office.

<https://www.davewilson.com/home-garden/>

University of Idaho Extension Office

Email: [ada@uidaho.edu](mailto:ada@uidaho.edu) Phone: (208) 287-5900

Web Address: <http://extension.uidaho.edu/ada>

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