



# Fruit Tree Growing Information

## Newly Potted Fruit Trees

To ensure their health, Five Mile Farm pots bare root fruit trees in containers right before bud break. Some of the fruit trees for sale in containers have been potted up this spring. **Please inquire with the staff at Five Mile Farm to know if your fruit tree was planted in a pot this season!**

Extra care needs to be taken if planting fruit trees within the first few months after they've been potted as the new roots will be fragile. Follow the planting and watering instructions as indicated below but make sure to be very gentle when removing the tree from the pot to disturb the new root growth as little as possible.

## Planting

Dig a hole that's twice as wide and just as deep as the root system...it's critical you don't plant your tree too deeply! Make sure to cover up to the root flare (the area where the trunk's main roots attach) but not much higher than that! The graft union should remain a few inches above the surface of the ground so that it doesn't rot or send up shoots from the rootstock that are different from the desired qualities of the fruiting stock.

When backfilling around the roots, it is advisable to only use the native soil that you removed after digging the hole. Although not necessary, prior to backfilling, sprinkling in a bit of fertilizer that includes mycorrhizae such as Down to Earth Bio-Live will enhance the root structure of the tree. Gently tamp down the soil around the roots and ensure the tree is straight. Staking the tree for the first year can be beneficial to ensure it remains straight. Finally, adding a couple inches of compost to the top of the soil at time of planting and then every subsequent year is a good idea to keep the soil well fed and happy. Just make sure that your compost doesn't touch the trunk to prevent crown rot

## Watering

Immediately after planting slowly and thoroughly soak the ground and allow the water to seep fully in...and then do this one more time.

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.



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## **Pruning**

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.

## **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.

## **Additional Questions?**

You can always give Five Mile Farm a call and we will do our best to answer any questions you may have. Dave Wilson Nursery, the grower of the bare root fruit trees sold at Five Mile Farm also has a wealth of information available at their website

(<https://www.davewilson.com/home-garden/>). The University of Idaho Extension office is another great resource for horticultural and agricultural questions. Their website offers many tips and tricks as well as seasonal class offerings.

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