

# FABULOUS FRUITS FOR FRONT RANGE GARDENERS

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## Selection of Fruit Trees

- Select Colorado hardy varieties of fruit trees. Some varieties will not tolerate low winter temperatures and are more susceptible to fire blight. Peach, apricot and sweet cherry trees are sensitive to spring frosts and will not always produce a bountiful crop.
- Apricots rarely fruit here because of late frosts in April, but are worthwhile landscape plants thanks to their fall color, summer foliage and other ornamental qualities.
- Peaches also are not dependable, but more so than apricots, as they flower later.

## Pollination of Fruit Trees

- Apples – In general, apple trees need another variety to be productive. That variety needs to be blooming at the same time and be within a distance of ¼ mile (the distance a bee can fly).
- *In the Denver Metro area, there are enough of both apple and crabapple trees that pollination is usually not a problem. But if you want to play it safe, plant 2 varieties within 100 feet of each other.*
- Apricots – Use two varieties. Nanking cherry will also do the job.
- Sweet Cherries – Use two varieties. Sour cherries will also work as a pollinator.
- Sour Cherries – Self-fertile.
- Peaches – Self fertile.
- Pears – Most need another variety for a better yield. Ornamental pears will work as well.
- Plums – Most need two varieties. American plum or western sand cherry will also work.

## Pruning & Thinning Fruit Trees

- Dwarf trees are easily trained with little pruning. If pruning is needed, save fruit-bearing branches and eliminate diseased, dead, thin or rubbing branches.
- Thin developing fruit two to three weeks after bloom to ensure flower bud set for next year and to allow fruit to reach maximum size.
  - Larger, but fewer, fruits decrease the chance of breaking limbs.

## Thinning Fruit – Stone Fruits

- By the time fruit is the size of a quarter, most of the unpollinated fruit will have fallen off. Remove all damaged or misshapen fruit. Thin remaining fruit to leave one fruit every 4 to 6 inches, or no more than two to three fruits per "hanger" (small branch).
- Thinning to a uniform size fruit will generally give you a harvest period of about two weeks. The harvest period can be extended by leaving fruit of varying sizes. The larger ones you leave will ripen first.

## Thinning Fruit – Apples and Pears

- Snip off imperfect fruit, leaving one fruit in a cluster and removing fruit from one-third to one-half of spurs. (Spurs are short lateral branches.)
- Continue thinning diseased or pest-infected fruit until harvest and pick up fruit drops from under the tree.
- Warm sunny days and cool nights ripen fruit. Heavy frost damages fruit.

## Apples

### Gala Apple

(*Malus domestica* 'Gala')

- An introduction from New Zealand, which is a cross between Kidd's Orange Red and Golden Delicious.
- One of the most widely grown apples in the world, it keeps well in storage; ripens in September.
- A reliable easy-eating apple with a punchy sweet flavor.
- 12 – 16' height and spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 7,500

### Haralson Apple

(*Malus domestica* 'Haralson')

- Medium sized, bright red winter apple that keeps well.
- Very hardy, starts bearing younger than most, often in the first year, ripens in October.
- Good choice for harsh locations. Introduced almost 80 years ago by the University of Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station.
- Tart and juicy.
- 12 – 16' height and spread.
- Zone 3, max. elevation 8,500 ft.

### Honeycrisp™ Apple

(*Malus domestica* Honeycrisp')

- Great tasting apple that stores for up to 5 months.
- Sweet and exceptionally crisp and juicy.
- Ripens in late September to early October.
- 12 – 16' height and spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 7,000 ft.

### McIntosh Apple

(*Malus sylvestris* 'McIntosh')

- John McIntosh discovered the original McIntosh sapling on his farm in Upper Canada in 1811.
- Crisp flesh is exceptionally juicy and bright white in color; sweet with a tart tang.
- Ripens September/October.
- Excellent for eating and sauces.
- 15' height and spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 7,500 ft.

### Red Delicious Apple

(*Malus domestica* 'Red Delicious')

- Large red fruit with a sweet flavor, especially when allowed to ripen on the tree.
- Ripens in early October and keeps well.
- Produces full crops every other year unless properly thinned; somewhat slow to reach bearing age.
- 12 – 16' height and spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 8,500 ft.

## Apricots

### Moongold Apricot

(*Prunus armeniaca* 'Moongold')

- Unsurpassed for eating out of hand, this tree is free from disease and vigorous.
- The soft golden colored fruits are of medium size and the flesh is firm and sweet. Blooms in late April.
- Must plant with Sungold for proper pollination. Ripens in mid-July.
- 12 – 16' height and spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 6,000 ft.

### **Sungold Apricot**

(*Prunus armeniaca* 'Sungold')

- Excellent for eating out of hand or for making preserves, this tree is more upright in growth habit than Moongold.
- Clear gold colored fruit with an orange blush. Blooms in the third week of April.
- Must plant with Moongold for proper pollination. Ripens in August.
- 12 – 16' height and spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 6,000 ft.

### **Goldcot Apricot**

(*Prunus armeniaca* 'Goldcot')

- An Apricot that can withstand cold winters – introduced in 1967 from Michigan.
- Fruit has a deep, tangy flavor, perfect for eating or canning.
- Self-pollinating, but planting 2 different varieties is recommended.
- 15 – 20' height and spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 6,500 ft.

### **Moorpark Apricot**

(*Prunus armeniaca* 'Moorpark')

- Native to China, this apricot was introduced into England before 1688. It was planted by an English Admiral at his estate called "Moor Park".
- A favorite for home canning, it has a high sugar content, making it sweeter than most peaches. Ripens July/August.
- 15 – 20' height 10 – 20' spread.
- Zone 5, max. elevation 6,000 ft.

## **Cherries**

### **Bing Cherry**

(*Prunus avium* 'Bing')

- A cultivar of cherry developed in the 1870s in the Pacific Northwest by an Oregon Horticulturist and his Manchurian Chinese foreman Ah Bing, for whom it is named.
- Large, firm and sweet, the cherries will crack open if exposed to rain near harvest.
- Needs a pollinator; ripens in late summer.
- 15' height and 12' spread.
- Zone 5, max. elevation 7,500 ft.

### **Stella Cherry**

(*Prunus avium* 'Stella')

- The large dark purple-red, heart-shaped fruit is sweet and juicy. Self-fertile and a good pollinator for other varieties.
- Resistant to cracking that Bing can be susceptible to; Fruit ripens in late July.
- 16' height and 10' spread, semi-dwarf version goes 10' by 8'.
- Zone 5, max. elevation 6,500 ft.

### **Bali Cherry**

(*Prunus cerasus* 'Bali')

- From Edmonton, Alberta, the buds are hardy to -43° and the tree is hardy to -54° F.
- The 1" fruit is semi-sweet and the tree is self fertile; ripens in August. Low to moderate water needs!
- This cherry works great in the mountains and great for the Front Range as well! (Also known as Evans Bali or Evans Cherry).
- 10' height and 8' spread.
- Zone 3, max. elevation 9,000 ft.

### **Montmorency Cherry**

(*Prunus cerasus* 'Montmorency')

- The finest sour or pie cherry. A heavy annual bearer, the average yield for a mature tree is 36–44 pints. Self-fruitful, requires no pollinator.
- A vigorous tree with upright, spreading branches and a rounded crown, it bears fruit at a young age. Late bloom means a more dependable production of fruit; ripens in June or early July.
- 15' height and 10' spread.
- Zone 5, max. elevation 7,500 ft.

### **Northstar Cherry**

(*Prunus cerasus* 'Northstar')

- A dwarf cherry with large, tart fruit produced in abundance. Self-fertile, very hardy to – 25°.
- A cross between a Siberian cherry and the English Morello cherry, this is a great pie cherry. Fruit ripens end of June.
- 10' height and spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 7,000 ft.

## **Peaches**

### **Elberta Peach**

(*Prunus persica* 'Elberta')

- Named for the wife of Samuel Rumph, a Georgia peach grower who perfected the variety in 1870.
- The world's most popular peach, this freestone is juicy, ideal for eating, canning and freezing. Ripens mid-August.
- 15' height and 12' spread.
- Zone 5, max. elevation 6,500 ft.

### **Polly Peach**

(*Prunus persica* 'Polly')

- Also known as the Polly White Peach, it is one of the more winter hardy peach varieties.
- Developed in Iowa, it is hardy to – 20°. Ripens early August.
- One of the best peaches for our area as it blooms later.
- White flesh, sweet and juicy; freestone and self-fertile.
- 12' height and 10' spread.
- Zone 5, max. elevation 7,000 ft.

### **Red Haven Peach**

(*Prunus persica* 'Red Haven')

- Developed in Michigan, this variety has become the gold standard for peaches, replacing Elberta as the most versatile and widely grown.
- Regular high yields make this one of the best home garden peaches.
- Orange flesh, sweet and juicy; freestone and self-fertile.
- Vulnerable to late spring damage due to early bloom time, ripens mid-August.
- 15' height and 12' spread.
- Zone 5, max. elevation 6,000 ft.

### **Reliance Peach**

(*Prunus persica* 'Reliance')

- Developed at the New Hampshire Agricultural Experiment Station in 1964.
- Medium sized juicy yellow freestone peach with a red blush. Ripens late July.
- Hardy to – 20°, this is an excellent choice for cold areas.
- 15' height and 12' spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 7,500 ft.

## Pears

### Anjou Pear

(*Pyrus communis* 'Anjou')

- Anjou, also known as d'Anjou pears, originated in Belgium and are named after the Anjou region in France.
- This high quality dessert pear has a bright green skin with an occasional soft yellow to red blush.
- Ripens in September, needs a pollinator. Best flavor when stored 1 to 2 months.
- 15' height and spread.
- Zone 5, max. elevation 7,500 ft.

### Parker Pear

(*Pyrus communis* 'Parker')

- A 1934 University of Minnesota introduction.
- Large, yellow-bronze fruit. Fine grained, tender and juicy.
- Blooms in May, ripens in mid-August.
- Needs a pollinator; hardy to as low as – 50°; more susceptible to fireblight.
- 15' height and 10' spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 7,000 ft.

### Summercrisp Pear

(*Pyrus communis* 'Summercrisp')

- This cultivar's name refers to its early harvest season (early August.)
- The fruit are best consumed without having been ripened; eating quality is highest while still firm and crisp.
- Needs a pollinator; very hardy and fireblight resistant.
- 12' height and 10' spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 8,000 ft.

## Plums

### Mount Royal Plum

(*Prunus domestica* 'Mount Royal')

- Striking blue fruit follows incredible pink flowers. Great for eating right off the tree, for preserves and jam.
- Ripens around mid-August, one of the hardiest European plums available.
- Freestone and self fertile.
- 15' height and 10' spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 7,500 ft.

### Stanley Plum

(*Prunus domestica* 'Stanley')

- One of the best tasting and reliable plums. The fruit is sweet, juicy and firm. The high sugar content makes them ideal for drying.
- Blooms in late spring, mostly self fertile, but benefits from a pollinator. Bears huge crops.
- Freestone, ripens in late September.
- 15' height and 12' spread.
- Zone 5, max. elevation 8,500 ft.

### Superior Plum

(*Prunus domestica* 'Superior')

- Fast-growing clingstone bears red-blushed crimson fruits bursting with super-sweet yellow flesh.
- Ripens mid to late August. Hardy Japanese-American hybrid. Needs a pollinator, or can use a wild plum.
- Bears fruit the first year
- 15' height and 10' spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 7,500 ft.

## Grapes

### Concord Grape

(*Vitis labrusca* 'Eastern Concord')

- The Concord grape is the dominant cold climate American variety – blue-black in color.
- Grapes are ready to harvest when they taste good (late September).
- Great tasting off the vine, also used for jams, jelly, juice and wine; slip-skin variety, large seeds.
- 20-25' height and 4' spread.
- Zone 5, max. elevation 6,500 ft.

### Himrod Grape

(*Vitis labrusca* 'Himrod')

- One of the hardiest white seedless grapes, this high quality variety ripens in late August and makes an excellent vine for the home garden.
- Great for fresh eating and for drying as raisins; seedless.
- Tolerates a wide variety of soil conditions.
- 20-25' height and 4' spread.
- Zone 5, max. elevation 6,500 ft.

### Reliance Seedless Grape

(*Vitis labrusca* 'Reliance Seedless')

- Considered to be one of the best tasting grapes. Juicy and deep red.
- Great for fresh eating and for fruit salads.
- Blooms late, avoiding late spring frosts, very winter hardy and productive. Ripens in August.
- 20-25' height and 4' spread.
- Zone 5, max. elevation 6,500 ft.

### Pruning Grapes

- The point of the pruning is simply to keep the vines in control, keep them in a form that you can work with and to regulate the crop.
- Failure to prune will result in heavy crops every other year (unregulated crop). The plant will not have the energy to properly ripen the fruit, or build reserves to get the vine ready for winter.
- When you actually prune a grape vine correctly, you remove as much as 95 to 98% of the previous season's growth.

## Berries

### Black Satin Blackberry

(*Rubus ursinus* 'Black Satin')

- Prolific producer of large, tart-sweet black fruit.
- Bears mid-July of the second year.
- Small white flowers precede the fruit on semi-erect then arching to the ground thornless canes. Heat tolerant.
- 5-6' height and 6' spread.
- Zone 5, max. elevation 6,500 ft.

### Autumn Bliss Raspberry

(*Rubus idaeus* 'Autumn Bliss')

- This autumn-fruiting raspberry produces heavy crops of large, delicious berries from August until the winter frosts.
- Larger red berries with superior flavor.
- The fruit are borne on the upper part of the current season's canes.
- 3-4' height and 3-4' spread.
- Zone 3, max. elevation 8,000 ft.

### **Heritage Raspberry**

(*Rubus idaeus* 'Heritage')

- Medium sized red berries exceptional for fresh eating, pies and jams. This variety freezes well.
- Everbearing, it will produce a crop in mid-July and again in September.
- 2004 Outstanding Fruit Cultivar Award winner (American Society of Horticultural Sciences)
- Will bear fruit the first year.
- 3-4' height and 3-4' spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 7,000 ft.

### **Jewel Raspberry**

(*Rubus idaeus* 'Jewel')

- Consistent producer of big, high-quality berries.
- Widely adapted berries are great for every use—fresh eating, canning, freezing, desserts, jams, jellies and roadside markets.
- Vigorous, self-pollinating plants. Ripens in early July.
- 3-4' height and 3-4' spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 7,000 ft.

### **Fall Gold Raspberry**

(*Rubus idaeus* var. *strigosus* 'Fall Gold')

- A rare, self-fertile gold raspberry with the same sweet taste of red varieties, and with the ability to produce two crops each season.
- After a late summer/fall harvest, a second crop arrives the following spring on the same canes.
- Excellent fresh or in pies and preserves.
- 3-4' height and 3-4' spread.
- Zone 3, max. elevation 7,500 ft.

### **Pruning Blackberries and Raspberries**

- Soon after the last berries have been picked, the canes that produced berries should be removed by cutting them back to ground level. This encourages the growth of new shoots the following year. Removing and destroying the fruited-out canes will also help eliminate the spread of any insects and diseases present on these canes.
- Remove only the canes that fruited. The canes that grew this summer, but did not bear fruit, are the ones that will bear next year's fruit.

### **Other Small Fruits**

#### **Pixwell Gooseberry**

(*Ribes hirtellum* 'Pixwell')

- Pixwell is practically thorn free, makes delicious pies and tasty preserves.
- Fruits hang on slender stems an inch below the branches where they're easy to pick — hence "Pixwell."
- Self fruitful and typically bear the first year after planting.
- 3-4' height and 3-4' spread.
- Zone 3, max. elevation 7,000 ft.

#### **Red Lake Current**

(*Ribes sativum* 'Red Lake')

- The finest variety of red currant, producing large bright red fruit in clusters. Larger red berries with superior flavor.
- Superb for jellies and syrups.
- Vigorous and upright growing plants.
- Flowers can be susceptible to late spring frost injury.
- 3-6' height and 6' spread.
- Zone 2, max. elevation 7,000 ft.

## **Jostaberry**

(*Ribes* × 'Jostaberry')

- Cross between a gooseberry and a black current.
  - Bears in early July in the second year after planting.
  - Flavor is that of a gooseberry with a mild hint of black currant.
  - Thornless, highly productive.
  - Excellent for fresh eating, juicing and jams.
  - 4-6' height and 4-6' spread.
  - Zone 3, max. elevation 7,000 ft.

## **Honeoye Strawberry**

(*Fragaria* × *ananassa* 'Honeoye')

- A June bearing variety that is super sweet, firm and juicy.
- Considered to have the best taste of all strawberry varieties.
- Very vigorous grower, heavy producer of conical glossy berries.
- Great for fresh eating and freezing.
- 12-18" height and 6-12" spread.
- Zone 3, max. elevation 7,000 ft.

## **Ogallala Strawberry**

(*Fragaria* × *ananassa* 'Ogallala')

- One of the hardiest strawberries around, great for freezing
- Pinch off blooms for the first year to promote a larger harvest in subsequent years. Fruits June-frost.
- Developed at the University of Nebraska, a cross between Rocky Mountain wild strawberries and garden varieties.
- 8-12" height and 12-15" spread.
- Zone 4, max. elevation 7,000 ft.