

# BARE ROOT FRUIT TREES

## PLANTING & CARE GUIDELINES

### Planting

Bare root trees are trees that have been field-grown and then dug up for planting. Their roots have usually been trimmed back quite hard, this is nothing to be alarmed about, they will grow just fine and must be kept moist until planted.

If you cannot plant immediately we recommend checking the root bag is damp every day, and keep the trees in a shady spot, out of direct sunlight and the wind. Planting at this time of the year gives the trees the cool, damp weather they need to establish a root system before the hot summer weather when their energy will be put into foliage and fruiting. Soaking the roots for 24-48 hrs in a bucket of water before planting will be very beneficial to your new trees.

If you haven't planted a tree before, you may find it easier to work with a partner the first time. The day you come to plant the trees, keep the roots in a bucket of water until you come to place in the planting hole.

We suggest a planting distance of up to 2.4m (8ft) or more apart for these trees. They can be planted closer, but you will need to prune more regularly to keep them in hand so they do not become too large once they start growing away well.

After deciding where to site the tree, dig a large hole, up to 30cm (12") deep and 60cm (24") wide. Place the topsoil in two piles and any subsoil in a separate pile. Be careful to keep the sides straight so that the hole isn't narrower at the bottom than the top. Lightly fork the edges and bottom of the hole to let the roots grow out more easily and provide air holes.

All of our fruit trees are grafted on a special root stock. It is important that the stock of the tree is not planted too deeply and covered up with soil. It should be easy to see the graft mark, and keep this above the soil when planting. The correct depth will avoid the stock sending out shoots, place the tree in the hole to check it is deep enough so that all the roots will be covered, but the grafting point of the stock will be above the ground, and make the hole deeper as required.

Once the hole is finished the stake is ready to go in; this is done before planting to avoid root damage. The stake should be around 80cm (32") above the ground, and vertical rather than angled when the tree is planted. Remove the tree from the hole to prevent damage when putting in the stake. One person holds the stake whilst someone else wields a suitable mallet or hammer to get it into the ground. Make sure it is both straight and secure. Place the tree next to the stake with the stem being about 5-10cm (2"-4") away.

Next mix some good quality compost with some of the topsoil you have removed from the hole. We suggest a mix of 25-50% compost to topsoil, this will help the trees establish. Now shovel some of this soil mix around the roots. Once the roots are covered, gently firm the soil to make sure it is tucked in around the roots. Shovel the rest of the top soil and firm again, and then add the subsoil at the top of the hole. Firm the soil again and now water the tree. We suggest giving 1-2 buckets per tree straight after planting even if the soil is damp. Tree failures mainly occur due to lack of water and competition from weeds. It is important to keep the tree well-watered every week with a heavy soaking on a regular basis, more so in hot dry weather so it does not dry out. Keep the area free of weeds that will compete for the trees water and feed. Mulching may be beneficial to retain moisture and keep weeds at bay.

Attach the rubber ties to the stake and then around the stem of the tree. The tie can be held in place by fitting tightly to the stake or fixing them to the stake with a nail. If rabbits are a problem in your area, wrap a spiral tree guard around the tree to avoid them nibbling its bark.

### After Care

The tree will need frequent and large amounts of water until it is established.

As the tree grows and the stem thickens, check the rubber tie to see if it needs loosening.

Also check the stake after stormy weather to make sure it is still secure.

Use special fruit tree fertiliser as directed by the manufacturer to get the most out of your trees.

If planting in large patio planters, follow the steps above, except, you will be using a high quality Tub and Basket compost, and will not need to dig any holes!

It is especially important for patio trees never to dry out, and get stressed. Plants should always be allowed to drain, but we suggest using a saucer with your pots in summer so that this can be kept full in hot weather to prevent the trees ever becoming dehydrated.

Feeding weekly with a good quality liquid plant food will also be essential in the growing season, as the trees roots cannot grow to find more nutrients, so must have everything they need provided to their pots.

### TOP TIP

*Dig a channel around the edge of the dug area to stop water running away from the root area.*

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## FAQs

### **These Trees look dead, why have they taken a long time to deliver?**

Once we have your order, the trees are carefully lifted from the fields when the conditions for lifting (and replanting in your garden) are just right. This is in the winter months, so we have to be careful the ground is neither too wet or too frosty, as this would not be good for the trees. We normally therefore suggest on pre-orders that delivery in early March is normal as a guide. Once the trees are safely gathered together in packs they are put into cold storage to prevent them coming in to growth before they reach you. The trees are not dead, simply dormant for winter.

### **Why are the roots and packing material looking dry? Will the trees survive shipping?**

Provided you follow the instructions and soak the roots well before planting, these trees will be just fine and thrive. We specifically keep the packing material and roots on the dry side so that the trees do not start to grow in transit, if it were kept damp, once removed from our cold storage they would want to start growing immediately, and this would be detrimental to them before planting. This is why trees purchased elsewhere from a warm cosy store environment often fail – they get too warm, start growing and dehydrate in the shop.

### **When can I expect fruiting?**

It is possible you could see some flowers and a few fruits this year, our pruning will have removed much of the initial fruiting buds however, and we would suggest removing any fruits that may form this season in order for each tree to concentrate on becoming fully established. Next year, you should get more flowers and fruit forming. If you want the best long term cropping, we would again remove any fruits that form next year, as the trees will become further established and produce bigger and better crops from year three as a result, and every year thereafter. Removal of fruit in the initial years of establishment is of course down to personal choice, but it is what the commercial orchards do for the first few years when they plant new trees, as they crop better for longer in the future.

### **Do I need a pollinator for these trees?**

This is not necessary, all the varieties in this collection have been selected as they are self fertile and the two apples will look after each other. The bees will do the rest. Although self fertile, if you have more trees, you will get better pollination and heavier crops.

### **How far apart should my trees be planted?**

Spacing of trees is again down to personal preference, and will depend on the space you have and how compact you will keep the trees by pruning. We would suggest a good amount of space between each tree would be 300cm, remember they are going to be here for decades, so if allowed to reach full potential will need a little space. It is perfectly fine to plant them closer together for smaller more compact trees where you will keep on top of pruning. Don't forget they can also be grown in large patio tubs for several years.

### **My tree is not straight, can this be corrected?**

Fruit trees will often have a curvature when young, this normally happens where they have been grafted and the stem grows upwards. Over time the tree will become much straighter, especially with staking. It is nothing to be worried about. If it is a big concern to you, plant the tree up to the graft mark to hide this, but be careful not to cover this, as the root stock these trees are on will keep them compact, if covered, the tree could form its own roots, and would grow very large.

### **My Trees have been planted for a few weeks, but I can't see any visible growth yet?**

This is nothing to worry about, it is most likely the trees are making fresh roots and simply taking their time before shooting. Because they are different varieties, you will also notice some shooting before others, they can start to grow at considerably different rates, and it should not be expected that a Pear tree will start to produce fresh shoots at the same time as a Plum tree for example.

If you want to check a tree is healthy, a good tip is to scrape back a little bark just above the graft, that should be green underneath, which means the tree is healthy and simply taking its time to shoot back, it is unlikely, but if it is dry and corky in appearance the tree has sadly failed.

Please be patient with new trees starting to shoot back, they may take a little time to show signs of growth and completing the bark test is important if you are in doubt.