



# COMMUNITY GARDENS FRUIT TREES 101

Presented by William Solomon | [william@cgbastrop.com](mailto:william@cgbastrop.com)



## GETTING INTO FRUITS!

There are so many fruits out there to try and have fun with! Some more difficult than others. If you are looking to try a fruit tree for the very first time and are iffy about it. Generally un-grafted and self-pollinating fruit trees are best. Figs are a great starter fruit tree! They can die back to the ground and reliably come back, they can handle heat and drought when established, and produce a good bit of fruit with one tree! Self-pollinating fruits are generally plums, peaches, figs, loquats, pomegranates, and blackberries. There are exceptions in all of these and for maximum production it's always good to get two of different cultivars that cross-pollinate so if one doesn't produce a fruit the other might. Choose what you enjoy! There is nothing more rewarding than growing and then eating your favorite fruit yourself!

## DETERMINE WHAT YOU LIKE!

As always, gardening should be for you! You choose the fruits that you like the best or that best align with what you want to do with them!

## WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?

Are you going to can them? Make jelly? Eat them straight off the tree? Grow them for your kids? Depending on your goals some cultivars may be better than others!

## RESOURCES

What is your irrigation like? Can it survive a drought? Do you travel a lot? Do you have a greenhouse? What is your soil like and does it need to be amended?



## GRAFTS

Most fruit trees are grafted on specific rootstocks, and this changes based on producer. This is so they take certain traits and generally hardier and more productive characteristics.

It is important to protect these grafts, anything above this is the desired fruit. Anything below the graft line is its rootstock, will produce a completely different tree.

Most trees commonly use grafts to have stronger trees that produce sooner and heavier that are resistant to certain ailments or to change their growth patterns. The most common way to help protect these grafts are loose wraps around the graft point to help insulate them in the very low point freezes then taken off since if kept too wet, they can cause fungal problems.



## ROOTSTOCKS

Rootstocks are the roots of your grafted trees. We won't go super in depth of these as the producers usually choose ones good for your area, but rootstocks can tell you tons about how your fruit tree will act and grow. It is very interesting to learn about but not required by any means.

Grafts and rootstock are found on citrus, stone-fruits, and apples most commonly. Fruits such as berries, figs, pomegranates generally are not grafted specimens.

Important note: if a tree does not have a graft, they can die back to the ground and still produce the same fruit, thus in a way making them slightly easier to care for.



## CHILLING HOURS: WHAT AND WHY ARE THESE IMPORTANT

Chilling hours are the total number of hours under 45F that is required for a plant to break its winter dormancy and produce a viable bud that can flower and fruit.

Paying attention to chilling hours is a big must! Producers should generally carry fruits that are akin to your area, but sometimes they don't so it's important to know, and if you don't you should ask!



## CHILLING HOURS IN DIFFERENT AREAS

Chilling hours are super important and affect much of what you can grow that will produce where you are!



Bastrop on average gets ~600 chilling hours and this fluctuates to be slightly higher or lower. That means if you get a fruit that requires just about or above 600 chill hours, it will not be cold enough for it to break dormancy and produce a fruit properly. This changes regionally greatly!! Galveston bay area receives about ~350 meaning that fruit options are different and has warmer winters overall.

I reiterate that most nurseries should carry ones that meet the requirements of your area, though this information is nice to know.

Chilling hours are not everything though, understanding the plants water requirements, heat tolerance, etc all help lead to the best choice of plants.



## Plum Tree Pollinators Chart

  **Pollen Source**

	AU Rosa	BlackIce®	Bruce	Burbank	Green Gage	Hanska	Methley	Santa Rosa	Satsuma	Stanley	Superior	Toka
AU Rosa (Japanese)												
BlackIce® (Japanese)												
Bruce (Japanese hybrid)												
Burbank (Japanese)												
Green Gage (European)												
Hanska (hybrid)												
Methley (Japanese)												
Santa Rosa (Japanese)												
Satsuma (Japanese)												
Stanley (European)												
Superior (Japanese hybrid)												
Toka (hybrid)												

**Key:**  Pair with a another variety for best results  Not a pollinizer  Good pollinizer



## POLLINATION

Pollination is required for a plant to set a viable seed to repopulate.

A plant can be self-pollination and yet still benefit from cross-pollination. Though some plants need to cross-pollinate to produce any fruit.

There are many fruits that can self-pollinate, but a lot of them will still benefit from cross-pollination!

A fruit that is self-pollinating means it has both required flowers growing on the plant for pollinators to move from flower to flower to pollinate the plant and set fruit.

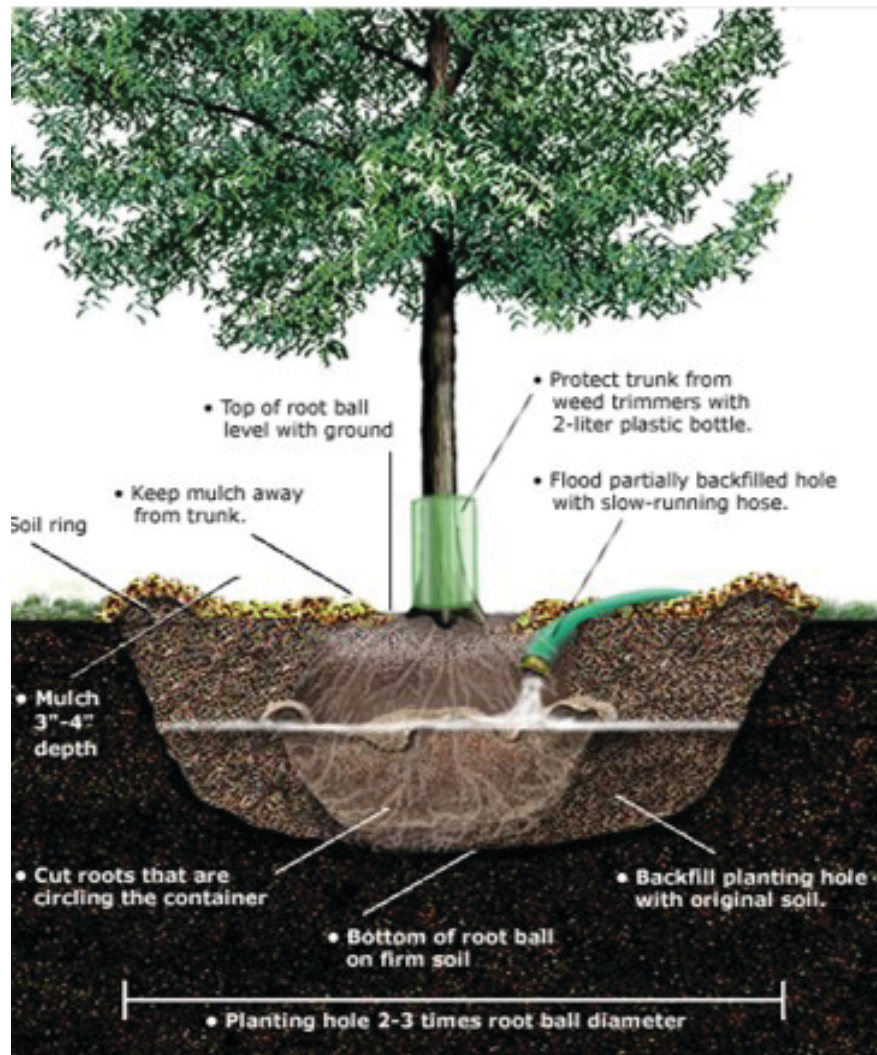
Cross-pollination can give certain fruits better characteristic as they take on genes from both parents. Some cultivars of fruits require a cross-pollinator to set fruit.

Cross-pollination of itself is a science! There are tons of pollinator charts online to help you find pollination partners! This is a simple way to know for sure!

## PLANTING A TREE

The best way to learn is doing, but general steps and important highlights can help a lot.

1. Select the proper location for your tree and its permanent home, (Sunlight, drainage, nutrients, feasibility and ease of access)
2. Dig your hole the same depth and no deeper than your root ball and dig the hole at least 2 to 3 times the width of the root ball/container (If you want to check drainage, fill hole with water and If it takes more than 24 hours to drain this is not a suitable spot for any fruit tree. )
3. Prune any diseased or damaged or dead branches and no more. Set the tree in the hole and the root collar (the part where the trunk meets the roots) is flush or slightly above the edges of the hole. Planting a tree too deep is the fastest way to kill any tree.
4. Gently fill the hole in as to make sure it's not too compact. Your goal is at least to fill with 75% and upwards of native soil, to get it acclimated to growing in its environment. Subtle additions of compost are ok raked into the top 3 inches of soil surrounding the growing area.
5. Stake the tree only if required and it should be staked for no more than a year. Think of it like crutch and if left too long the tree doesn't form properly and become reliant on the crutch.
6. Mulch around your tree with about 2-3 inches of organic mulch. Mulch is there for water retention, reducing temperature fluctuation, and to form a barrier from weeds. It is important when mulching to not have it directly touch the trunk of the tree and generally is recommended to make a basin under it so the tree can catch more water.



7. Water your tree on a regular schedule for the first two to three years. For the first week water once per day, then the next week every two days, then after that once every week. Of course, your soil will tell you when it needs to be watered! Depending on conditions you may have to water more or water less. Your goal is to wean it off supplemental watering, so it develops a wider and stronger root system that can better help the tree thrive. Overwatering is the second fastest way to kill any plant.
8. Protect your tree with a wire mesh that is wide enough and tall enough to protect it, 3X3 4X4 are both good sizes depending on the tree. This is to protect it from the likes of deer or livestock rubbing on it and breaking the trunk or damaging branches and keeping them from stripping the tree of leaves.