



Backyard Fruit Tree Care

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This Can Be You!



Growing Quality Fruit

- Requires planning and long-term commitment
- Annual cultural practices
 - Pruning, fertilization, irrigation, weed control, IPM, thinning, harvesting
- Different fruits have different cultural requirements



Site Selection

- Deep, well-drained, productive soils
- Cold air is denser than warm air and flows down slope (like water)
- Gentle slopes are preferred
- Avoid “frost pockets” where cold air can become trapped
- There are some viable frost protection techniques

Minimizing Spring Frost Damage

- Select appropriate cold hardy varieties
- Damage usually occurs at 28° F or lower
- Maintain bare ground
- Covering trees to trap heat (PVC frames)
- Incandescent light bulbs



Rootstocks/Grafting

- Disease Resistance
- Dwarfing
- Graft Compatibility
- Precocity
- Scion is usually budded



“T” Budding

Tree Selection

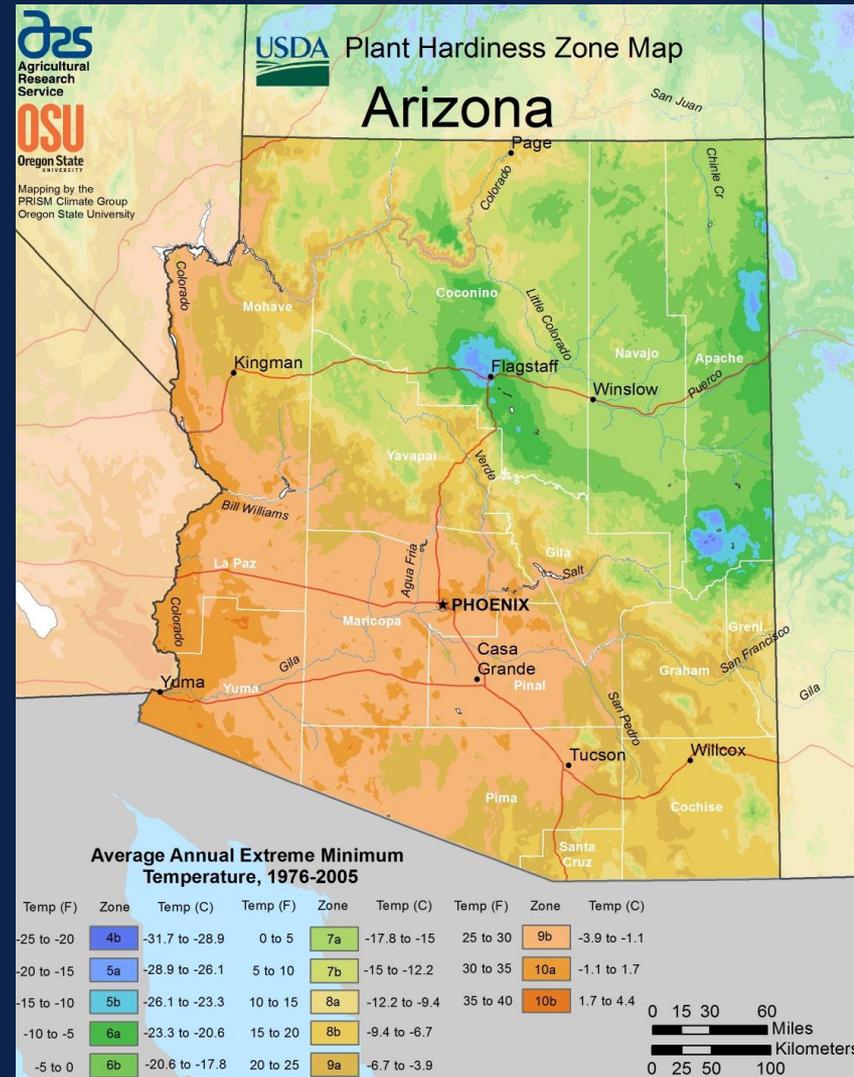
- Bareroot trees are recommended
- Roots should be fresh and there should be no leaves or flowers
- They are shipped in large boxes with moist shavings on roots
- Don't purchase the "bagged" trees at big box stores



Fresh bare root trees

Variety Selection

- Know your USDA Plant Hardiness Zone
 - Prescott, PV, Chino Valley are in Zone 7b: minimum 5 to 10° F
 - Dewey/Humboldt is in Zone 8a: minimum 10 to 15° F
- Self fruitful vs. non-self fruitful (requiring cross pollination)
- Select varieties that bear at different times
- Know the variety's Chilling Requirement (continued on next slide)



USDA Hardiness Zones in AZ

Chilling Requirements Recommended for Yavapai County

- Verde Valley (3,000 to 4,500 ft)
 - 600 to 750 chill hours
- Prescott (4,500 to 6,000 ft)
 - 750 to 1,000 chill hours
- These numbers are approximate and some fruit varieties do not have chilling requirements high enough for our area
- The Dave Wilson Nursery resource that we will share has most fruit varieties and their chilling requirement at:
<https://www.davewilson.com/product-information/category/fruit-trees> (this is not an endorsement, just good information)

Planting and Pruning Bareroot Fruit Trees

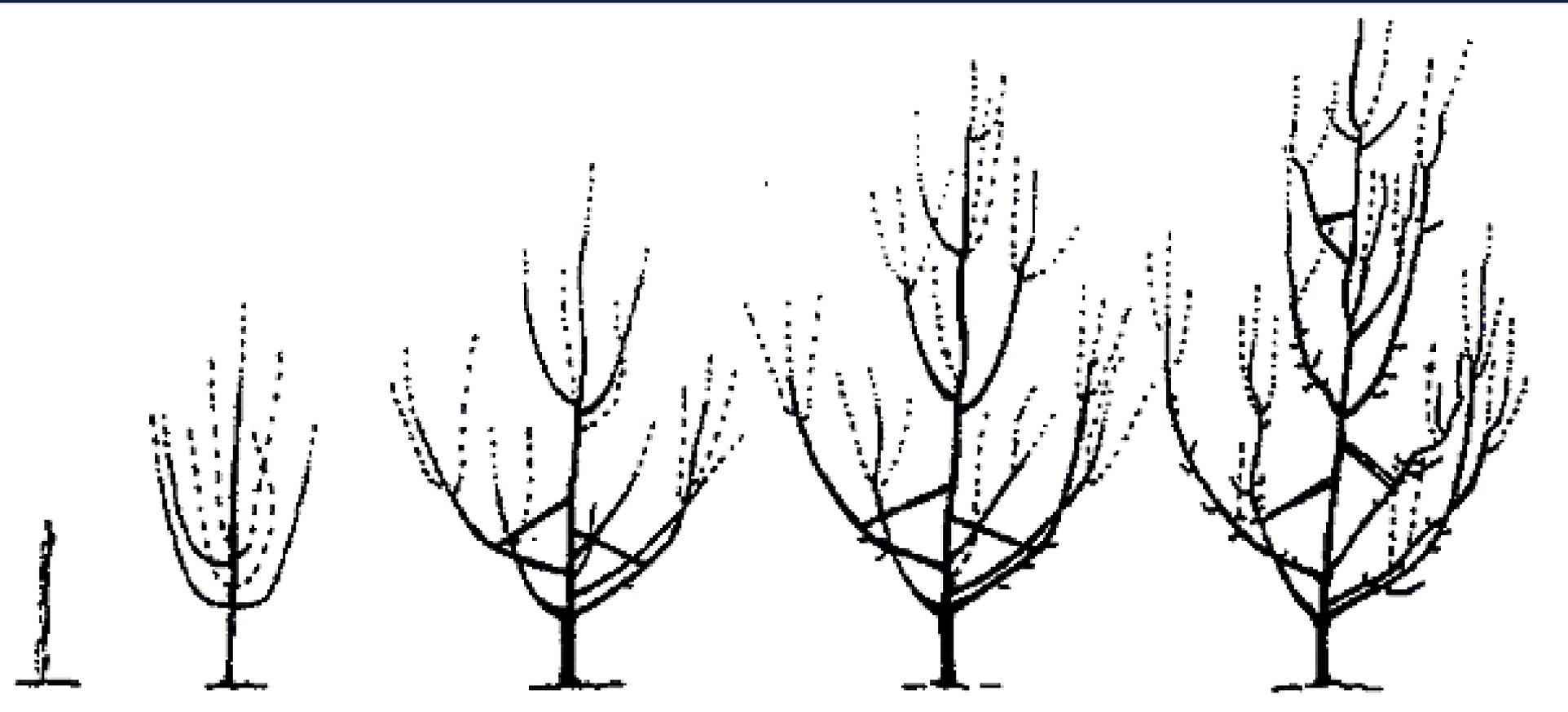


Pruning Established Fruit Trees

- Modified Central Leader
 - Apples and pears
- Open Center
 - Stone fruits: peaches, nectarines, plums, apricots, cherries, etc. Some people prune apples and pears this way too



Pruning: Modified Central Leader



Pruning: Open Center





Semidwarf Fuji Apple – 17 years old

<https://youtu.be/OxU67I2pQVc>

Fruit Tree Irrigation

- Flood/basin irrigation is probably best, basin should ideally be 2 feet beyond drip line
 - Drip irrigation is also effective as long as it adequately designed and functions
 - Microsprinklers will also do the job
 - Apply some water during dry winter periods
 - Mulching will prevent evaporation, but can also prevent the soil from warming
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Fruit Tree Fertilization

- Small amounts of nitrogen fertilizer three times during the summer
- Water in the fertilizer
- There are also recommendations in the Fruit Tree Publication – remember to split the applications



Thinning Fruit

- Thinning improves fruit quality and can increase yields
- Thin fruit to be about 5 to 8 inches apart and only one fruit per cluster

