

# Fruit Without An Orchard



**Apples in the living room? Berries on the porch?  
Now you can grow your own fruit  
without having an orchard!**

by Elizabeth Chute

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# Fruit Without An Orchard

Imagine enjoying the taste of sun-ripened strawberries early on a summer's morning. And then there are the grapes under glass.

You, too, can grow luscious fruit - even without an orchard.



In the living room, on the roof, in tubs on the porch, or in your own conservatory, many fruits can be grown in a relatively small garden area. For example, soft fruits such as black currants and raspberries can be raised in tubs. Strawberries can be grown in a variety of ways, from hanging baskets to wooden kegs. Miniature apples, pears, and figs do well in large tubs. And other types of trees such as peaches can be trained to grow against a wall in a fan shape or espalier.

## Basic Requirements & Growing Tips:

Other than the size the mature plants will reach, there are several basic requirements to consider when deciding where to grow your fruit trees and shrubs.

- Pollination - Always bear in mind that unless you choose a special variety that can produce fruit on its own, you will often need either more than one of the same species, or a complementary tree or bush in order to have your tree set fruit. If the plants are to be grown in your home or a conservatory, you will also need to be prepared to cross-pollinate by hand. (A small, artist's paintbrush comes in handy.) Your local nursery will be able to advise you as to pollination requirements.
- One of the most important things to consider is sunlight. Most fruiting varieties of trees & shrubs require generous amounts of direct sunlight in order to bring a crop to maturity.
- Soil - Well drained soil with annual fertilization is a must for plants confined to containers and tubs. A

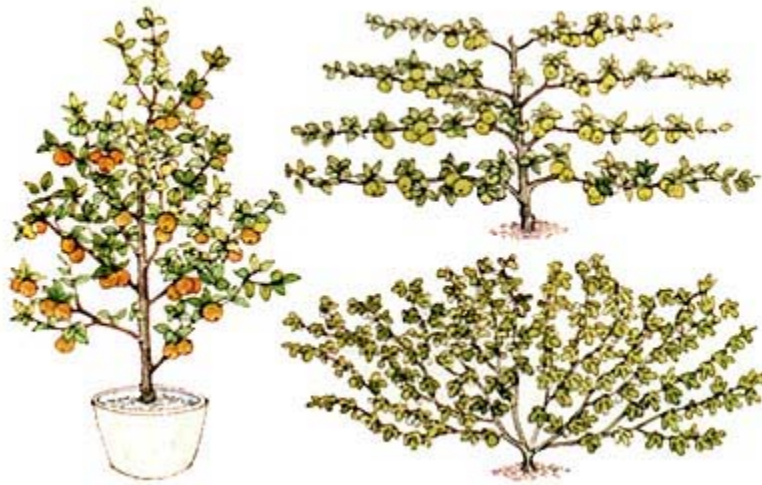
nice, composted manure applied to the top of the soil, or top-dressed, early in the spring will help your plants to flourish. Too much fertilizer, however, can cause bland, soft fruit that is more susceptible to brown rot. A complete fertilizer such as 10-4-4 will help growth along if you prefer to use something other than composted manure.

- Keep trees well watered and fed. Water the plants "deeply" or right down to the bottom of the roots rather than just at the surface. But remember that too much or too little water can cause fruit drop. Do your best to retain a nice, even amount of moisture.
- As your fruit trees begin to set fruit, careful thinning will result in a larger, higher-quality crop. It will also encourage steady, year-to-year productivity.

The best time to thin is when fruits are one-half to one inch in diameter (unless you are growing one of the tiny, miniature varieties, in which case it will be smaller). For apples and Japanese plums, thin to one fruit per cluster, being careful to not damage long-lived fruiting spurs.

- Annual pruning is a must. Most trees or bushes can be pruned and trained into cordons, in which the fruits grow close to the stem or trunk, making a thin, space-saving tree or bush. They can also be made into fans or into espaliers, in which the branches grow in horizontal tiers in one plane. Each type of fruit has a different bearing habit, which determines the correct pruning procedures. Some trees, such as peaches and apricots, must be pruned heavily to remain productive. Prune others, such as apples and pears, more selectively to avoid removing fruit-producing spurs.

- Most deciduous fruit trees need a minimum amount of "chill" in winter to grow and fruit well the following season. The chilling requirement of different fruit trees is the total number of hours below 45F needed while the tree is dormant in winter. Chilling requirements vary considerably, so be sure to talk to the nursery before you buy your trees.



Some examples of how to prune fruit trees

# Soft Fruits

## Black Currants

Black Currants yield as much as ten pounds of fruit per bush. They are hardy plants, but should be kept in the sun or in partial shade.

The fruits grow on young wood, so the old shoots should be pruned away close to the soil after fruiting or in the winter.

New bushes can be grown by planting cuttings in the autumn.



## Red Currants



Red currants and white currants can be grown as bushes, or as fans trained against a wall or fence. They need a sunny, sheltered position.

Unlike black currants, the fruit grows on old wood, and the only pruning needed is to cut away about half the main new growth, pruning other new shoots more drastically.

Propagation is by cuttings in the fall.

## Gooseberries

Gooseberries grow well on a well-drained, medium loam soil. They can be grown as bushes or single-stem cordons. Pruning is like that of red currants, except that it need not be so severe as the young wood as well as the old wood produces fruit.



Birds are likely to damage the plants in winter, so tie cotton thread around the bushes to discourage them.

Propagation is by cuttings taken in the autumn.

## **Raspberries**

Raspberries are grown from healthy canes bought from a nursery or garden center. Plant them in winter in a sunny position (if you live in a fairly moderate climate), and cut down to 12 inches in spring to encourage growth. The canes will tend to need supports when grown.

Those canes that bear fruits should be cut down to soil level in the autumn, while the ones which are to bear next year's crop should have their tips removed in early spring.

## **Blackberries & Loganberries**



Blackberries and Loganberries can be trained in fans on wires supported above the pots or tubs, and do well against a fence or wall. Position wires at 3, 4 & 6 feet above soil level, and tie the stems to these.

Treatment is like that of raspberries.

Thornless varieties are available.

## **Strawberries**

Strawberries can be grown in barrels, in special strawberry pots, on movable strawberry walls, and in hanging baskets if you should need to move them around to keep them in the sun.

Strawberries need good drainage and a soil with plenty of humus. You can grow them from healthy plants bought from nurseries or garden centers, or the plantlets that form on the varieties with long runners can be pegged down to form new plants that are planted out in the summer.

Strawberries must be protected from frost when they are flowering and fruiting. They should also not be kept for more than 3 years as virus diseases are likely to occur. It's best to burn the old plants, and then plant out new.

You can make a **strawberry barrel** by taking one end out of an old barrel, drilling drainage holes in the other end, and making 2" holes in two or three rows around the sides. The first row should not be less than two feet from the base of the barrel, and the positions of the holes should alternate so that the holes in adjacent rows are not directly above or below each other.

Place a two inch perforated zinc tube in the center of the barrel as low as the first row for watering, and fill around it with good potting soil.

Place a strawberry in each hole and some more in the top of the barrel.

Place the barrel in a sunny location and keep it well watered once growth starts, being sure to add manure or fertilizer in mid-spring. The strawberries will grow and run all over the barrel.

A **Strawberry Pot** is just like a small version of a strawberry barrel, but made out of clay. It is used in exactly the same way, but needs more frequent waterings due to its smaller size.

A **Strawberry Wall** is made of a framework of wire mesh. Strawberries are planted at the bottom and trained to climb up and over the wall. Like the strawberry barrel, it can be moved to keep it sheltered from frost early in the year and to take it out of the sun later on.

Another good way of growing strawberries is to use hanging baskets



# Fruit Trees

## Apples & Pears

Apples and pears can be grown in pots on a patio or roof. Young trees are easily bought from nurseries or garden centers. They may have to be transferred to larger pots as they grow.

Few varieties are self-fertile, so carefully chosen pairs of trees will have to be purchased unless you grow a "family" tree. A family tree is a way to enjoy several different varieties of apples without raising many trees. Three to five different varieties are grafted onto one trunk, and both eating and cooking apples can be harvested from the tree.

Family apple trees do not always last very long, as the strongest varieties tend to take over the tree. The chosen varieties will usually fertilize each other.

Container grown apples and pears need little work. Fresh soil must be packed around the roots every year, and they must be protected from frost. Dwarf varieties are best, and they can be trained into pyramid shapes or into cordons or espaliers.

Prune in winter to maintain the shape of the tree, and again in summer to cut back new growth so that the light can get to the fruit. The trees also may need spraying in summer and winter to kill pests and blight.

Be sure to remember to ask the nursery if your particular tree requires "chill" time to set fruit next year.



## **Figs**

Figs are a good choice for pot growing, if you have a sunny site for them, because restricting their roots keeps them under control and aids fruiting.

Buy a growing tree already in a pot. The fruits will only ripen in cooler climates if they are well sheltered and get a lot of sunshine.

The best way to raise them is to train the tree in a fan against a sheltered wall that faces the midday sun. The fruits form on shoots produced during the previous summer, and these shoots need protection from frost by covering them with sacking.

Pruning should be carried out in spring to removed old growth and overcrowded shoots.

## **Peaches, Nectarines & Apricots**

Peaches and nectarines can be trained in fans against a sunny wall. You can even purchase already-trained trees! The site you choose for your tree must be frost free because the trees flower early. They must be watered well in dry summers.

Prune in early summer, cutting away all side growth along the branches except at the base and tip. If you need to spray with pesticide, winter months are best.

Apricots are raised in much the same way as peaches. Buy a dwarf fan-shaped tree and train it against a sunny, sheltered wall. It will grow to about 10', so take this into consideration as it may be too large for your patio.

# Misc Fruit & Nuts

## Grapes

Delicious grapes can be grown under glass such as in a conservatory, and there are many varieties for warm climates. Other, hardier varieties can be raised outside in cool climates, though sun and warmth are needed to ripen the fruit.



The vine can be grown from a young plant placed in a large tub. A compact plant can be developed by allowing the strongest shoot to grow and cutting the others back in winter to one bud. Fruit will form from this main shoot, but the bunches may have to be sheltered if they are to ripen.

A new main shoot is chosen every winter, and the old one cut away. Alternatively, the vine may be allowed to climb over a trellis, pergola or fence if it is required more for decoration than for fruit.

## Nuts

Cobnuts or filberts, which are varieties of hazelnuts, can be grown as bushes in tubs. They flower early and therefore need protection from frost in cool regions.

The male catkins must shed their pollen **before** pruning. Leave last year's growth, but cut back old wood to one catkin. Another pruning is done in midsummer, cutting back side shoots to half their length or breaking them and leaving the ends hanging.

The nuts can be harvested in autumn and stored for winter use.

## **Chinese Peanuts**

Chinese peanuts are an interesting variety that can be grown from seed. Grow them in pots, indoors in a sunny location.

After flowering, the young fruits bore themselves into the soil. Dig up the nuts when the plant has turned yellow. They taste great!



## Containers For Your Garden

Here are some great containers from a variety of suppliers.

**Be sure you are connected to the internet in order to use the links!**



[Stack & Grow](#)



[Copper Planter](#)



[Stacking Planter](#)



[Slat-sided](#)



[Pyramid](#)



[Classic Planter](#)



[Terra Cotta](#)



[Wicker Planter](#)



[Arabella Planter](#)



[Pyramid Rail](#)



[Teak Planter](#)



[Starfruit Planter](#)



[Imperial Planter](#)



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[Planter/Trellis](#)



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[Rail Hugger](#)



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[Self-watering French Planter](#)



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[Rolling Planter/Trellis](#)



[Planterboxes & Bench](#)



[Cedar Windowbox](#)



[Wicker Planter Trellis](#)



[Oversized Planter](#)



[Steel Garden Planters](#)



[Personalized Crock](#)



[Plant Caddy](#)



[Strawberry Planter](#)



[Athena Planter](#)



[Barrel Planter](#)



[Self-watering, rolling planter](#)


**Other interesting links & resources:**

- [Nature Hills Nursery, Inc:](#) a great selection of trees, shrubs, fruit trees - even hard to find species.
- [International Dwarf Fruit Tree Association](#)
- [Gardening Tips & Information](#) - from basics such as composting and healthy soil to specialties like bonsai and kids gardening, here's an interesting list

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