

## Fruit Guide

*Get the best from  
your fruit plants*

### Quick Tips

- Open packaging immediately on receipt and stand upright where appropriate.
- Remove bagging if present on the pots. If plants seem dry, place roots/pots in a tray of water for half an hour.
- When growing in containers, don't fill to the brim with compost. Leave up to 2.5cm (1in) of pot on show to allow for watering – halve this for small pots and cell trays.
- If growing on the windowsill, turn plants regularly to prevent them stretching towards the light.
- Pots should always have drainage holes, but place on saucers/trays to prevent surface staining. It also helps retain extra water during summer heat.
- Always water prior to planting or potting on.
- Prepare soils ahead of planting. For the best establishment, work incredicompost® and incredicrop® fertiliser into the growing area. These will also give you the best results in containers displays too. Alternatively opt for regular liquid feeds through the season, starting at 6 weeks after planting.
- Avoid planting when soils are too wet or frozen.
- Acclimatise all indoor grown plants to outside conditions after the last frost. Harden off by placing outside by day and back undercover each evening for 7-10 days.



**Position, soil preparation, general aftercare:** Wherever possible the site should be open and sunny, on well-drained soil. Avoid a waterlogged site and where there are larger or overhanging trees. The soil should be well dug, removing all perennial weeds and large stones, adding liberal quantities of well-rotted garden or stable compost. An application of 85g (3oz) per sq yd of Bone meal or similar proprietary compound fertiliser is recommended. During the first year after planting your trees and plants should be kept well-watered during hot, dry weather and the area kept clear of weeds. Fruit trees can suffer considerably from weed competition, especially grass. Mulching with well-rotted stable manure, rotted garden compost, straw or grass cuttings during the summer helps to retain moisture. Moisten the soil first if it is dry prior to mulching. Try to keep any mulch away from the tree stems to avoid any diseases. Mulching should continue for 3 to 4 years after planting, and on poor soils it should be done every year. A good tip when planting trees is to insert a piece of plastic pipe with holes drilled in the sides, reaching from the base of the roots to just above the soil level. Water down this pipe to get the water to where it is needed. It also minimises the problem of surface rooting and encourages the tree roots to search deeper for water and nutrients.

**Pruning:** This is essentially about balance. The balance between leaf and fruit, fruit and branch length, and the balance of one side of the tree to the other. In pruning therefore, you should try to develop a tree with equal branches on all sides, of equal length and evenly spaced. Remove any dead, diseased, crossing, crowded or damaged branches. Pruning cuts can be protected with wound paint from your garden centre to minimise any infections. 'Light and air' are the best friends of a fruit tree so do not be frightened to remove large branches.

**Pollination:** All currants and berries require pollinating, bees and other insects will do this if the weather conditions allow, and it is not necessary to grow extra bushes to assist pollination. Many of the 'tree fruits' require a pollinator to ensure success and this information, where necessary, is given in our catalogue. Keep a watchful eye for frosts during flowering time and cover with sacking, horticultural fleece or blankets to minimise damage. Dormant potted plants can be planted straight out into the garden as long as the soil is not frozen or waterlogged. When spring comes, the dormant plants will come back into growth. Keep the compost in the pot only slightly moist until you have top growth on the plant of a couple of pairs of leaves.

**Bird damage:** We offer flexible fruit protection netting as an easy way to protect your fruit bushes and trees from birds. Just drape the net over each bush or tree or make a structure to attach the netting for a permanent fruit cage.

**Fruit thinning:** Apples and pears benefit from 'fruit thinning' in early July after the natural 'June drop' has finished. Reducing to two fruits per cluster will give better quality fruit and an increased overall weight. Plum thinning is vital, as in some years the weight of fruit is so heavy that branches can break. You may need to remove some 75% of the fruitlets but do not be alarmed as the remaining fruit produces superb size and quality. Peaches, nectarines and apricots allow a fruit every 15-20cm (6-8in) along the branches. Cherries seem to flower and fruit successfully without any interference.

**Plants supplied as potted plants or plugs:** Pot your 5cm (2in) plants up immediately, if not, stand the plants in a cool, well-lit and well-ventilated place. To prevent your plants becoming lopsided, turn them round 90° every other day. Water well and allow to drain before potting. When handling the plants hold them by the root ball. Pot into 9cm (3½in) pots of good quality multi-purpose compost.

**Plants supplied as bare roots:** These plants are field grown in a nursery and lifted during the plant's dormant period. During autumn and early spring, bare root plants show little or no top growth. Your plants will have a strong root system, planting at this time of year is ideal and will give the plants time to become established. You will see new growth appear later in spring once ground and weather conditions improve. Bare rooted plants must be protected to ensure that the root does not dry out at any time.

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