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# How to Grow Pears: The Complete Guide



Botanical Name:	<i>Pyrus</i>
Plant Type:	<a href="#">Fruit</a>
Season:	<a href="#">Full Sun</a>

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# Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Pears

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

**Last Updated:** February 14, 2025



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Biting into a juicy pear is one of life's joys.  
Growing pears is generally easier than

into small yard spaces, too! Learn more about planting pear trees in your backyard.

When growing pears, note that two cultivars are generally needed for successful pollination and fruit set. Most pear trees are not self-pollinating. You can also grow pears in containers—and plant them at any time of the year. Make sure you purchase pears specifically bred for containers.

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Be aware that pears can take a few years or more to begin flowering and bear fruit. But once they start producing, pear trees are prolific and long-lasting!

There are many different types of pears; some are best eaten raw, and some are best for cooking. Learn more about pear varieties in this guide!

## ADVERTISEMENT

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- [Growing Asian Pears—Juicy-Sweet, Yet Crisp!](#)
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## PLANTING

- Plant pear trees in early spring. Order bare root plants in midwinter so that they arrive in time.
- You'll need full sun for the best fruit set, fertile, well-draining soil, and good air circulation.
- If you live in the dry western regions, you should choose fire blight-resistant types and rootstocks.
- Plan to plant at least two varieties of pear trees, as they will need to be cross-pollinated to produce fruit.  
Make sure the varieties are compatible

- Space standard-size trees 20 to 25 feet apart. Space dwarf trees 12 to 15 feet apart.
- For container-grown trees, remove the plant from its pot and remove any circling roots by laying the root ball on its side and using shears to cut through the roots.
- For grafted trees, position the inside of the curve of the graft union away from the sun when planting.
- Dig a hole that is a few inches deeper and wider than the spread of the roots. Set the tree on top of a small mound of soil in the middle of the hole. Be sure to spread the roots away from the trunk without excessively bending them. Do not add fertilizer or topsoil to the hole.

[Check out our video to learn more about how to plant a bare-rooted fruit tree.](#)

## GROWING

- Water the young trees well during dry

nium nitrate per tree multiplied by the number of years the tree has been set in moderately fertile soil. If you have highly fertile soil, use less fertilizer.

- If the leaves are pale green or yellowish during the summer, use a little more fertilizer the following year.
- If the tree grows more than 12 inches in one season, use less fertilizer the next year.
- Be very careful when applying fertilizer! If you give your trees too much nitrogen, they will become more susceptible to fire blight and also may focus too much energy on producing foliage instead of flowers and fruit.

## Pruning Pear Trees

- Prune annually to keep the tree healthy. Generally, prune lightly to keep the trees looking their best and productive.
- For dwarf trees, prune them to a central leader system.
- Standard-size trees can be pruned to either a central leader system or a

- The central leader system features a central trunk with branches that spiral out every 5 to 8 inches, making sure that no branch is directly above another. The training for such a system begins in the early summer of the first year when you should remove any shoots that form within 18 inches of the ground. The end result should resemble a Christmas tree.
- Use spreaders to help shape the branches of the trees. These help the branches to spread outward rather than upward. When the branches are small, you can use clothespins to push the branches away from the main trunk. For bigger branches, use wooden slats with a “V” shape notched into each end.
- Remember to thin the fruit as well, leaving about 6 inches between each cluster of fruit per branch.
- After your trees are established, water them regularly.

## Types

— . . . . .

large fruits. These pears ripen to a yellow color. However, this variety is very vulnerable to fire blight.

- ‘Kieffer’, which is resistant to fire blight. This type produces medium fruit and can be used in canning.
- ‘Anjou’, which produces light-green fruit with a sweet flavor. This type is a good choice for late-blooming pears. Good for canning and fresh use. This type can store for up to 6 months with little loss in quality.

## HARVESTING

- Harvest pears when they are mature but still hard. Ripen the pears at room temperature for the best quality fruits.
- Mature pear trees produce a lot of fruit in a short window of time.  
Be prepared!
- To store pears, pick them when they are fully grown but still very hard. You can keep them in the refrigerator; they should last for about 1 week. You can also keep them in containers in a cool



- You can also can the pears for longer storage.

## GARDENING PRODUCTS



## PESTS/DISEASES

- Fire blight
- Pear psylla
- Aphids
- Mites
- Powdery mildew

## WIT AND WISDOM

Drop peeled pears in cold, lightly salted water, and they won't turn brown.

## RECIPES

**OPEN-FACE PEAR-FIG PIE**

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CRISPS**

**HAZELNUT SHORTCAKES WITH  
HONEYED PEARS**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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## COMMENTS

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**Brian (not verified)** 4 days 1 hour ago

We have a pear tree that was here when we bought the place and had just wonderful large juicy fruit the first 3 years then smaller and smaller and harder and dry.

Nursery had me try several things over last 6 years and fruit no bigger than quarters hard bitter. Tree is about 25' tall maybe 10' around at largest spot. What should I try? Or just need to cut it down?

Thanks

Brian

[REPLY](#)

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**Joe Bills** 2 days 16 hours ago

Hi Brian,

Thanks for your challenging question.

water, additives, etc. Like the rest of us, pear trees can get a bit persnickety as they age, and it is not uncommon for older trees to “age out” of fruit bearing. But in many cases, they can be rejuvenated over the course of a few years through knowledgeable pruning. If you haven’t already, I’d suggest the next step might be a consult with a local arborist to get an opinion on whether your tree might respond to this approach. In the meantime, here’s some helpful information on bringing back old pear trees, courtesy of the Oregon State University extension service.

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/berries-fruit/restore-those-old-fruit-trees#:~:text=When%20working%20with%20apple%2C%20pear,your%20tree%20and%20yield%20potential.>

I hope this gets you headed in the right direction.

Joe Bills

Associate Editor

OFA

REPLY

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**Paula (not verified)** 1 year 9 months ago

Should I wash the pears, and if so, when?

REPLY

**The Editors** 1 year 9 months ago

We recommend washing the pears just prior to consumption. (of course, you can dust them off before that!)

REPLY

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**Amy (not verified)** 3 years ago

i bought 2 bartlett at about 7 to 9 feet tall. do i trim before planting?

Is it okay for them to be so tall and lanky?

I'd like to have some good juicy pears but also

REPLY

**The Editors** 2 years 12 months ago

Shorter trees (4-6 ft) are preferred for the initial planting, but whether you should prune or not depends more on the tree's branching structure. We would recommend taking a look at the [pruning section of this pear tree guide](#) by the University of Minnesota, which covers a few different situations.

REPLY

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**Sharon (not verified)** 3 years 11 months ago

I have a variegated pear tree with three different varieties on it. Will it bear fruit or do I have to plant another in order to have fruit.

REPLY

I've lived in Upstate SC zone 7 for three years and discovered a Bartlett on my property. It's a small tree, no idea how old, but set fruit for the first time last spring. The fruit were small when I harvested, but I waited one day too long. The night before, I had about 30 pears. The next day, all but 4 had disappeared. So I suppose the best indicator of the time to harvest is to stay up and watch for the squirrels! I knew how to determine if they were ready to pick, but I didn't know about putting them in the fridge, so my first harvest made for a pretty picture, but the squirrels and eventually the birds got to enjoy them. I'm thrilled to learn I can cross pollinate with an Anjou or Asian. Pruning intimidates me, so I believe I'll hire a local nursery to prune the Bartlett and properly plant an Anjou or Asian, or both! Thanks again for all the wonderful help.

**REPLY**

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**Julie (not verified)** 4 years 8 months ago

Am I able to submit a photo of my Pear tree and/or a Pear from the tree somewhere? I



long before because it was full grown when we bought the property. It's old and tall and has lots of beautiful Pears on it. Well odd shaped pears.. Are they canning Pears, baking Pears or just eating Pears? I have to say I've never tried them.. Each time I think I've figured out what they are I read something that makes me believe I'm wrong.

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 4 years 8 months ago

Your best bet is to take pics of the tree and the fruit and show them to the folks in a local nursery (or two or three). Or show them to a fruit vendor in a farmer's market. Or consult your local cooperative extension; you can find it

here: <https://www.almanac.com/content/cooperative-extension-services>

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