

Stone Fruit Care – Fact Sheet

Planting

- Ideal time for planting is early May in Melbourne as the plant is entering dormancy. Exact timing depends on the weather but the aim here is to plant while the soil remains warm enough to encourage some root growth. This will change year to year so basically, once you notice the seasons change, wait a couple of weeks then plant.
- Prune your plant by about a third, trying to create a vase shape. Often this involves removing the central leader.
- Dig hole twice size of pot
- Incorporate well-rotted organic matter or purchased compost into existing soil. (Optional - Add Rock Dust at recommended rates to improve nutrient holding capacity of soil)
- Plant to a depth no greater than level with the surface of potting soil. If planting into heavy clay leave the 10-15mm of potting soil above ground level and mulch well.
- Mulch well with at least 50mm mulch
- Apply Liquid Soil Conditioner at recommended rates
- Water in well and keep moist not wet for four – six weeks depending on weather. Don't under or overwater. Check soil.
- Once dormant pick clean up all leaves

Pots

- Use premium potting mix.
- If keeping the stonefruit in the same pot forever, replace potting mix every 2-3 years and prune back root by $\frac{1}{4}$ before replanting stonefruit back into pot. As a minimum, even dwarf stonefruit will need a minimum size of 70 Litre container. The superdwarfs you can get away with a 50cm diameter container but it will require daily watering in summer to stop fruit fall.
- After planting apply soil conditioner
- Apply compost but ensure trunk of tree is not covered in compost /soil
- Don't grow anything else in pot no matter how small.
- In summer place pot saucer under pot but and water well but allow saucer to dry out completely between waterings.

Fertiliser

- At planting apply liquid soil conditioner such as Seasol and a complete fertiliser such as Scotts Eco-Organic.
- In autumn and Spring apply a six month controlled release fertiliser that is specially made for Stonefruit.
- From early Spring until fruiting, it is worth considering the application of additional potassium fertiliser. This encourages fruit set and increases the drought hardiness of the plant
- Particularly for potted fruit trees they would benefit from an application of a seaweed based liquid soil conditioner every 4-8 weeks.

Do's

- Research has shown (in commercial orchard settings) that limiting irrigation after fruit set, just sufficient to cause plant some degree of drought stress actually encourages greater flower production and hence the potential for more fruit the following season.
- Ensure all galls removed by early August
- After leaf fall, clean up all leaves and apply a general fungus clean up spray such as Lime Sulfur.
- In Spring at bud swell and before bud burst it is a must to spray all stonefruit with leaf curl spray to prevent leaf curl disease. Given the unpredictability of weather events at this time of year it is difficult to know the exact time when to spray hence we suggest 2-3 applications may be required to ensure you get the timing right.
- We are a great believer in summer pruning to shape your tree during the growing season. Mid winter pruning is OK but encourages a surge of growth in Spring at the point of pruning.
- Try and keep to a vase shape, to allow adequate air movement. Remove shoots that are going to cause branches to rub against each other etc.
- Stonefruit require varying amounts of winter chill, (depending on type and variety) measured as hours below seven degrees, to set fruit. It is therefore OK to plant stonefruit in valleys or hollows in which frost accumulates. However, late frosts can damage flowers and fruit production. Planting near taller trees such as gum trees can keep the microclimate around trees too warm to provide sufficient chilling hours.
- Some stonefruit such as plums and cherries require a cross pollinator to maximise fruit production

Don'ts

- Plant in full shade
- Grow other trees too close.
- Allow fallen leaves to gather at tree base (can harbour fungus).

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- Be shy about pruning; stonefruit will recover amazingly quickly with adequate soil conditions (moisture, aeration and nutrition)
- Don't over water!- Allow plant to dry out between waterings.

Product: Examples Only

- Osmocote® Plus Trace Elements: Fruit, Citrus, Trees & Shrubs
- Scotts© Pure Organic™ Fruit & Citrus Plant Food
- Seasol Soil Conditioner, Munash Renew, Scotts Pure Organic Seaweed Liquid Plant Food; Eco Seaweed.
- Rock Dust – Munash
- Compost – Scotts Pure Organic Compost; Munash Revitalize Compost
- Iron Chelate- Yates Leaf Greener
- Yates Health Trace Element Chelates
- Yates Lime Sulfur
- Leaf Curl Spray
- Eco Seaweed

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