

# Fruit trees require more care but worth the effort

*Selecting the right varieties key to raising trees that will thrive in Nevada's fickle climate*

By Michael Janik ■ Master Gardener

## FINDING THE RIGHT SIZE: Dwarfing rootstocks have made fruit bearers better suited to small urban lots

Arbor Day is an annual national observance that promotes the planting and care of trees. If you are planting a tree this year, why not plant a fruit tree? Although fruit trees require more care than landscape trees, you get a reward for your effort. My motto is: 'If you can't eat it, why grow it'?

Success in growing fruit trees starts with selecting varieties that will produce in our climate, so look for varieties that bloom late and ripen early. This year, many apricots have already bloomed, but will not set fruit due to the cold weather. Like many avid gardeners, I push the limits of what will work here. My white nectarine produces most years, but one year we had cool weather all fall and the fruit did not



New, smaller trees fit in urban back yards.

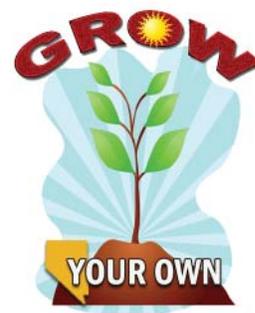
sweeten. Warm daytime temperatures encourage sugar production; cool nights aid the development color and flavor.

Another consideration is the rootstock. A standard apple tree can grow to 25 feet or taller, a bit large for an average size city or suburban lot. Over the last 100 years, however, various dwarfing rootstocks have been developed which will keep apples and pears under 12 feet when mature.

Stone fruits (peaches, plums, cherries, etc) are available on semi-dwarf rootstock which produce trees about 15 feet tall. Some stone fruits are also available as genetic dwarfs known as miniatures, some of which produce annually in our area.

Other tree options include nut trees and species fruit trees. Some varieties of almond, pecan and walnut will grow and produce

**Continued on back**



## About this series

This article is the 11th in a University of Nevada Cooperative Extension series on starting your own vegetable garden. Articles explore such topics as site selection, ordering seeds and preparing your soil. To find the complete series of articles, go to our ["Grow Your Own" page at www.unce.unr.edu](http://www.unce.unr.edu).



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# Research trees before planting

northern Nevada. Other trees produce fruit that although not used as out-of-hand eating fruit have other edible uses. One such fruit native to Nevada is chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*); it makes an excellent jelly or syrup. Chokecherries tend to be bushes, although other varieties and cultivars of chokecherry will grow as a tree. Before purchasing a fruit

tree, do a little research. University of Nevada Cooperative Extension's handout "Fruit trees for northern Nevada" has a list of varieties that will produce here. To find more varieties that would produce in cold climates, look to such sources as the University of Minnesota, Cornell or the Harrow Research Station in Ontario. Googling the variety

and type of rootstock available at your local nursery will give you a good idea if the tree you are buying will produce for you in northern Nevada.

*Michael Janik has been a master gardener since 1996 and is an ISA certified arborist. He has more than 100 varieties of apples and other fruit varieties in his small backyard orchard. Details: [www.michaelsapples.com](http://www.michaelsapples.com)*

## Michael's recommendations

My initial fruit tree planting was in 1999 and is mostly apples; I have added varieties annually every year since. Here are my recommendations of varieties and preferred rootstocks that are the best bet for our area.

**Apples**—most varieties will produce here.



Some of our favorites are Honeycrisp, Smokehouse,

and Newtown Pippin. Standards like Granny Smith, Golden Delicious, and Red Delicious are also annual producers. Recommended rootstocks are Budagovsky 9 (Bud-9, B9), ELMA 26 (M26), and Mark.

**Pears**—I don't grow any, but many varieties will produce here. Bartlett



(green or red), Bosc, and Seckel on OHxF 333 or PyroDwarf (new, still being tested, but available).

**Peaches**—Elberta, Early Elberta, or Veteran (I am trying these now) on semi dwarf (70 percent of standard)



rootstocks Citation, St. Julian, Colt, or G.M.61/1 (40 percent of standard); also try genetic miniatures from a cold climate nursery.

**Plums**—Italian or Stanley,



Green gage produce every year for us; on the same

rootstocks as peach.

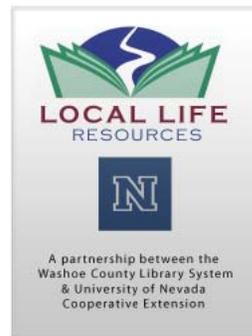
**Cherries**—This year I'm planting North Star (genetic Dwarf, any rootstock will do) discovered and commercially tested in Minnesota and Kristin on Colt. Kristin was commercially tested in Minnesota and Norway.

**Apricots**—Try Manchurian,

Hargrand, Harogem or Tomcot; Manchurian as a rootstock will produce the smallest tree.

**Nut trees**—try Hall's Hardy almond, native pecan (*Carya illinoensis*), or black walnut. (These recommendations are based on at least one person reporting annual production in northern Nevada).

Don't be afraid to try other varieties, just do a little research and look for cold hardy (to -20 F), late-blooming, and early ripening varieties. If you know any other varieties that produce annually in northern Nevada, let me know.



## Want to learn more?

The following titles are available through the Washoe County Library System. Go online to <http://www.washoecounty.us/library/> and look for this logo, or call your favorite library to reserve a copy for pick-up at a convenient branch.

- Gardening with Heirloom Seeds: Tried-And-True Flowers, Fruits, and Vegetables for a New Generation. 635 COU 2006
- Heirloom Vegetable Gardening: a Master Gardener's Guide to Planting, Growing, Seed Saving, and Cultural History . 635.0973 WEA 1997
- Heirloom: Notes From an Accidental Tomato Farmer. 635.642 STA 2008
- Restoring American Gardens: an Encyclopedia of Heirloom Ornamental Plants, 1640-1940. 635.9 ADA 2004
- Melons for the Passionate Grower. 635.61 GOL 2002
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