



University of California Cooperative Extension – Kern County

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **PLANTING AND CARE OF DECIDUOUS FRUIT TREES**

The salubrious climate of the southern San Joaquin Valley allows many kinds of deciduous trees fruit to thrive. The typical winter fog is also beneficial for deciduous fruits because fog events increase the number of chilling hours. Mountain locations are also suitable for fruit species, such as apples, which require additional chilling and cooler summer temperatures to develop quality fruit. However, mountain sites may experience an increased risk of late spring frost, an event that can destroy the crop. Desert locations may be suitable for some fruit varieties, and good yields may be obtained in home orchards – again if late frost does not injure the crop.

When planting, choose a location which will receive plenty of sunlight and, if possible, will be protected from wind. Allow plenty of space for the mature trees. For full-size trees, 20 to 24 feet is a typical spacing. Soil amendments in the planting hole are generally not necessary, and may prove deleterious. It's best to settle the soil with water rather than tamping the soil. Whitewash, or white latex paint diluted 1:1 with water, is recommended for the trunks of young trees to prevent sunburn.

When selecting fruit trees, be sure to obtain a variety suitable for your location. The widest selection is often found in early spring when bareroot trees become available, and bareroot fruit trees are preferable to container stock. Attention to variety selection may also reduce some pest problems. For example, mid-season peaches mature during the annual green fruit beetle flight, whereas later- or earlier-maturing varieties avoid this insect. If cross pollination from another variety is necessary for fruit set, such as for sweet cherries, be sure to get a compatible pollinator, or use a two-in-one or three-in-one grafted tree. It's a good idea to label varieties so that if a tree dies it can be replaced. Similarly, labeling branches of grafted trees may prevent an inadvertent pruning cut which completely removes the pollinating limb. Nemaguard rootstock is preferred for stone fruits where nematodes may be a problem, which is most locations in Kern County. For apple trees, rootstocks of the MM series give varying degrees of dwarfing. For helping in variety selection, a publication, *Deciduous Fruit for the Home*, is available at the UC Cooperative Extension Office, 1031 S. Mt. Vernon Avenue, Bakersfield.

