

## Fruit Tree Selection for Southeast Nebraska

Fruit tree selection in Nebraska can be quite tricky. There are many details that need to be considered when choosing fruit trees. You need to know what types of fruit trees will do well in Nebraska, what diseases can be problematic, and what harvest time you are looking for. This article will, hopefully, help you with these questions and aid in your selection of proper fruit trees for our climate.

Apples- Apple trees tend to be quite hardy for Nebraska, they are one of the best choices for fruit trees here. There are many things that need to be considered when selecting apple trees for Nebraska, including: harvest time and quality, suitability for the uses you desire, proper root stock selection, disease resistance to apple scab and cedar-apple rust, and proper pollination sources. Some apples that are resistant to both cedar-apple rust and apple scab include: Redfree, Johnafree, Liberty, Arkansas Black, Enterprise, and Goldrush. All of these apple selections are well suited for our environment and this gives us a list of apples that cover a wide range of harvest times. Redfree is mature in early August. Johnafree and Liberty are mature in early September. Arkansas Black and Enterprise are mature in mid-October. Goldrush is mature in late October. All of these apples, except for the Redfree have a long shelf-life so they last longer.

If you are looking to have dwarf trees, you will have to use apple trees that are grafted onto dwarf root stock to inhibit their growth. This can be detrimental to their vigor and hardiness, so you must be careful in our Nebraska environment. The best dwarf root stocks to use in Nebraska are MM111, MM106, or Bud-118 rootstocks. This will give you a tree that is 60-70% of full size while still growing enough of a root system to handle our Nebraska environment.

Crabapples- Crabapple trees are also quite susceptible to apple scab and cedar-apple rust. These two diseases can do a lot of damage. Often times, you will see a crabapple tree with no leaves by late August due to apple scab. We need to make sure that we plant crabapple trees that are resistant to avoid major damage in the summer. As for red crabapples, prairiefire and Selkirk are two good choices for Nebraska that are resistant to both diseases. For pink crabapples, a couple of good choices for resistance would be Louisa and Sugar Thyme. Finally, for white crabapples, choose either White Angel or Red Jewel.

Pears- Do not use dwarf root stock. Select at least two varieties, three would be better. Make sure that the varieties you choose have good fireblight resistance. Good varieties for Nebraska include Moonglow, Luscious, Lincoln, Magness, or Seckel.

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**Apricots-**They make a very hardy landscape tree but they only produce fruit once every ten years or so. They are self-pollinating. Harglow would be the only variety to possibly give you fruit more often and it blooms about five days later than other varieties.

**Cherries-** Sweet cherries do not perform well in our Nebraska climate. It is very hard to keep the tree alive long enough to bear fruit. In a very protected location, your best chance for fruit production on a sweet cherry would be with Gold or Black Gold. Tart (pie) cherries are the cherries that grow best here in Nebraska. North Star is a natural dwarf type tart cherry tree. Other varieties that do well in Nebraska include Meteor, Montmorency, Surefire, and Balaton. If you are planning on using a dwarf cherry tree, make sure that it is on Mazzard root stock.

**Peaches-** In protected locations, peaches like Reliance, Red Haven, Contender, and Madison might be hardy enough to give some yield over the years. Most peaches in rural areas only live 5-7 years, which is barely enough time to get production started. Peaches start readily from seed. Even though you never know until the first harvest what the peach will be like, some of the most productive trees have been grown in this method.

**Nectarines-** Nectarines are a little harder to grow than peaches in Nebraska, which means they are not very productive. The best choices for Nectarines are Harblaze and Hardired.

**Plums-** Plums are just slightly hardier than peaches. Newer varieties like Early Golden, EarliMagic, Toka, Methley, and Ozark Premier could be chosen. Older varieties include Stanley and Italian prune, Green Gage, and Damson.

**Quince -** For the jam makers, quince bushes are very hardy and bloom late enough to always produce a crop in Nebraska.

**Kiwis -** Have not proved hardy and well adapted enough to be considered for Nebraska acreages.

This is an updated publication from one previously written by Paul C Hay, Extension Educator in Gage County.

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