

Live Free and Dig

with the Littleton Garden Club

Fruit from trees and bushes

BY SUSAN RETZ

Littleton Garden Club

Imagine walking into a garden, picking an apple from a tree or a handful of blueberries. This feels so successful, fresh, and delicious. It didn't take much to inspire us.

We were renovating and living in the house where my husband grew up. A 50-year-old apple tree produced small green apples; great for pies and applesauce, but hardly appetizing to any beast but deer and bears. We planted a small orchard, plus 10 blueberry bushes, three gooseberry bushes, five currant

bushes, one quince, and three hazelnut bushes.

Not knowing what could successfully grow or what to expect, we've learned a lot over the past ten years. The initial orchard consisted of nine plum trees (several different species because we were told they liked to be in groups), three pear trees, two apricot trees, and three crab apples to protect the orchard from winds. The plums have been the most successful, but they produce fruit every other year. The apricot was the least successful (they need to be paired with the appropriate soul

mate to produce fruit); we lost one each year and replaced at \$75 per tree. Last spring, we didn't buy another apricot but added a fourth pear tree. After ten years we saw our first pear and hope this is a step towards success. We also added a few cherry trees and they have produced fruit every year. Study the fruit you would like from trees and plant accordingly. So far, I am convinced that apples, plums, and cherries will reward for the effort. Learn from my experience, but find out for yourself.

The most important

process for setting up fruit trees is the planting process. First, decide when to plant: Fall or Spring. Winter in New Hampshire makes my choice: Spring. You must water your tree every week during the first Spring and Summer. When acquiring trees, find out if it is self-pollinating or needs company of the appropriate pollinator. If your tree or bush is bare-rooted, you must soak it for 6 to 8 hours. Next is the hole you dig. It does not need to be any deeper than the roots, pot, or root ball and ending at the trunk flare.

THE LITTLETON COURIER, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2025

Let's talk about other ways of making fruit for you and the wildlife in the garden. We have a large Service Berry in our yard, which provides fruit for the wildlife. We also have prolific blueberry bushes and a quince which makes wonderful jelly. Red and white currants are shared with birds. Goose berries are a memory from my grandmother's garden and table. Not just to expand the sources of fruit, we have a male and female Kiwi and a white grape vine. Lastly

It needs to be two to three times in diameter, with sloping sides. Place the tree in the hole and fill it with soil. Compact the soil to avoid air pockets, and you don't need to add compost or fertilizer. You are acclimating your tree to its new home. Water it well.

One problem you could have is the Emerald Ash Borers or other pests. One simple protection is to wrap the base with a metal wire screen wrap and spray them with Neem Oil, a natural enemy of insects.

are the hazelnut bushes we got from the American Arbor Association. They are amazing. They were a twig with a root, and within three years of planting, they produced nuts for us and the squirrels who haunt our bird feeders. All creatures get a meal at our house!

Littleton Garden Club is an active, fun group of people from around the area.

We welcome new members. For more information, please visit: <https://www.littletonngardenclub.org/>.