



Gardeners Helping Gardeners Succeed

2450 S. Curry Street, Carson City, NV 89703

Tel:775-882-8600 Fax:775-882-7285

License #16114

www.greenhousegardencenter.com

All About Plums & Prunes

Pollination

Many plums need cross-pollination from specific varieties to set adequate crops. Such requirements will be included in the variety descriptions. Santa Rosa is one of the most versatile pollinizers.

Pests and Disease

Plums are subject to a variety of diseases and pests. Few are troublesome except in cool, humid regions. A regular spray schedule, however, may eliminate most of these problems. **Dormant oil spray or dormant disease control applied in January or February before the buds swell will help ensure a healthy crop by killing overwintering insect eggs.** Further insect control may be achieved by spraying with *Master Nursery Pest Fighter, Fruit & Vegetable Insect Control* or *Garden Insect Spray* if infestation is discovered.

Possibly the most serious disease is bacterial gummosis, which causes long, narrow, damp-looking gummy patches on the trunk or branches. This can be controlled by pruning; be sure to sterilize your pruning implement after each cut or use by dipping it into a 10-to-1 bleach and water solution. Without proper sterilization, you will pass the disease to other parts of your tree. Bacterial gummosis can also be prevented by following a regular fertilization and watering schedule.

Neglected trees may develop mites. Ask for professional garden center assistance in mite identification and control. A regular washing down of the tree with the power end nozzle of your hose may be your best control because it breaks up the spider mite webs. Be careful that you don't wash off your blossoms or fruit!

Pruning & Thinning

When cared for properly, plums achieve tremendous shoot growth. For this reason, they may require pruning at all stages. Trees should be trained in a vase shape, which is readily accomplished because of the vigorous growth and free-branching habit of most varieties. Some tend to branch upright and should be cut to outside branches. Others tend to spread and should be cut to inside branches. After the initial training period of 2 to 3 years, it is unnecessary to cut back branches. Prune carefully. Plums bear on long-lived spurs that are formed abundantly on all branches.

Many plums tend to overbear. Pruning can seldom regulate a crop so that no thinning is needed. Hand thinning should be done as soon as the fruit is large enough to be seen and picked easily. The remaining fruit should be thinned to 4 to 6 inches apart and clusters should be broken up. Look before you thin your fruit! Each tree is different; yours may not require thinning.

Harvesting

For best quality, plums should remain on the tree until firm ripe. This stage is often difficult to determine. Possibly the best guide to ripening is to watch for softening fruit. As soon as they appear, most fruit on the tree will be ready to harvest.

Due to the uncertainty of wholesale grower stock, trucking, and weather, all varieties will not be available at all times. Although we do have the ability to special order some stock, we make no guarantee of its arrival and cheerfully encourage alternate selections.

Available Varieties

Blue Damson: The smallish blue fruits are best for jam, jelly, and preserves. **Self-fertile.**

Burbank: The large red fruit has amber flesh of excellent flavor good for canning or dessert.

Pollinize with Santa Rosa.

Elephant Heart: Very large. Blood red skin. Red flesh, excellent flavor - one of the best.

Use Santa Rosa as a pollinizer.

Emerald Beauty: One of the highest rated in taste tests. Light green skin, greenish-yellow to orange free stone flesh. Sweet, crisp and crunchy.

Pollinize with Beauty, Burgundy, Late Santa Rosa, Flavor King Pluot

Green Gage: This European variety greenish-yellow fruit has amber flesh and is good fresh, cooked, or preserved. **Self-fertile**

Italian Prune Plum. Large, oval. Dark purple skin. Excellent quality, greenish-yellow flesh. **Self-fertile**

Mariposa: The large round fruit has maroon skin and flesh. **Pollinize with Santa Rosa.**

Mount Royal: Dark purple fruit. Sweet, firm, juicy. **Self-fertile.**

Ozark Premier: This extremely large red plum has yellow flesh. the trees are disease resistant, hardy and productive. **Partially self-fertile; may use Satsuma to pollinize.**

Redheart: Medium-sized fruit is slightly oval to heart-shaped (thus the name) with dull green skin covered by medium dark red with heavy, gray bloom. The bright red flesh is sweet, firm, fine-grained and aromatic. **Partially self-fertile; may pollinize with Burbank or Santa Rosa.**

Santa Rosa: Widely popular large plum with a deep crimson skin and flesh that is purplish near skin and yellow, streaked pink near the pit. Excellent for dessert or canning. **Self-fertile**

Satsuma: A meaty, small to medium blood plum with red juice, dark red skin, red flesh and a small pit. Its mild flavor makes it a good choice for desserts or preserves. **Use a Santa Rosa as a pollinizer.**

Stanley Prune: One of the most widely planted European plums because of its dark blue fruit with firm, richly flavored yellow flesh. A heavy bearer. **Self-fertile.**

Superior: This large, conical red fruit with russet dots and heavy bloom has yellow, firm flesh excellent for eating. **Pollinize with a Toka.**

Toka: This large, pointed fruit is medium red, and often described as apricot colored with a rich, spicy flavor. **Use Superior as a pollinizer.**

Yellow Egg: This golden yellow European plum has a thick skin and yellow flesh. **Self-fertile.**

Summer Pruning

For best size control and fruit on Apple, Apricot, Mulberry, Nectarine, Peach, and Plums, prune during the summer months.

For height control, cut new growth back to the desired size in June. The remaining stubs will re-sprout quickly. In early September, cut back again, just below the newest sprouts. This method is called **Double-Heading**. It is OK to prune at any time during summer to keep the tree at its' desired size. Double-heading is simply less time-consuming.

Most of us were originally taught to prune in winter. More recently, authorities tell us to prune in the fall. The latest research has proven that summer pruning is most effective because these fruit trees do not grow during the fall. Therefore, any foliage remaining after summer pruning will gather energy all fall for the next year's crop. Heavy winter or fall pruning eliminates wood that has already stored ample energy, leaving underlying wood with less potential for fruiting.

It was also thought that trees should be pruned when dormant because less sap leaks out. Now we understand that this leaking is actually beneficial to the trees as a natural defense mechanism.