



BREAZE FRUIT TREES FOR THE BACKYARD

Thursday 27th May 2010

Presenter: Graeme Taylor

Qualifications: Graduate Diploma of Horticulture | Bachelor of Science (Chemistry)
Graduate Certificate Education (Tertiary) | Graduate Certificate Educational Leadership and Management

- Currently work for DPI in Learning and Workforce Development
- Worked in a range of roles in teaching and management of horticulture and related programs in various TAFE Institutes over a 20 year period. Areas taught; plant propagation and nursery production, pest, disease and weeds, botany, soils, plant I.D., pruning and range of other horticultural topics.

Graeme has coordinated and taught courses in organic herb and vegetable production, organic farming and olive production. Currently involved with the City of Whittlesea and RMIT's Chinese Medicine Department on a project looking at the establishment of an industry to grow and process Chinese herbs.

Introduction to Growing Fruit at Home

This is for people contemplating planting deciduous fruit trees at home.

It is intended for people with little experience in horticulture and is designed to assist with taking the first steps towards establishing fruit trees in the home garden.

You will learn more by taking the plunge and planting some fruit trees than you will by reading lots of books and taking courses. Once you start growing you can then relate what you read or what you learn to what is happening with your trees, in your garden.

What to grow in Ballarat and surrounds

In Ballarat the easiest things to grow are apples, which also have a reasonably low water use (keeping in mind that if you want your trees to produce reasonable quantities of fruit then they will require water). They require cross pollination from a suitable variety, which means you will be looking at planting at least 2 trees.

Almonds are fairly reliable, as are plums, peaches, nectarines, quince, pears, apricots and cherries. Other species to consider would be fig, walnuts, edible grapes and berries.

Also remember that deciduous trees have other roles in the garden by providing shade and creating cooling micro-climates in the hotter months and allowing light in through winter.

Site selection

Keep in mind that most fruit will require a sunny location. Protection from cold winds is generally important.

Soils

You would usually want a sandy to clay loam soil but you will need to work with what you have. The easiest way to assess your soil is to see how well other plants are growing. If they are growing O.K. then things should be fine for growing fruit trees.

Aim for a pH of 6 - 8, you can get simple indicator pH test kits from your nursery or hardware store. Normally your trees will be planted 4 - 6 metres apart.

Planting your tree

- Select a location for planting
- Clear the site of weeds/grass
- Dig holes 500 - 600 mm square and 300 - 400mm deep
- Add 1 - 2 buckets of compost, half a bucket of dried cow manure or other aged manure 2 - 4 weeks before planting
- If planting bare rooted trees, you will need to prune any damaged roots
- Position the tree on a loose pile of soil placed in the bottom of the hole then gently fan roots before backfilling with soil. To avoid any air pockets around the roots and to keep the tree firmly embedded in the soil, gently agitate the trunk.

- You should plant the tree at the same level it would have been growing before it was dug up - you will see the soil line on the tree bark
- Gently compact the soil by treading on the soil around the root zone
- Water the in tree after planting

Most fruit trees won't like being water logged so if it is continually wet, you will need to do some work or select another location.

Varieties

Unless you have your heart set on a particular variety I would suggest you purchase what is available locally. In some cases rare varieties can be hard to locate and you might need to get a nursery person to propagate which may take 2 - 3 years. Choose apple varieties you know and like.

Most trees require cross pollination except for peaches, apricots, sour cherries and grapes. Look in books, magazines or nursery catalogues to find suitable cross pollination varieties.

If you are after heritage varieties contact one of the heritage fruit societies or go to one of the days at Petty's Orchard in Templestowe or contact Permaculture Melbourne. Also see what is available via the internet, but keep in mind that unless you are buying from a reputable source you can't be assured of the quality.

Pruning your tree at the time of planting

You will need to prune your new tree. You are trying to create a tree that is structurally sound, allows air circulation and makes picking fruit easy.

Some of the training methods are to create a vase shape, a central leader or espalier. Don't spend too much time worrying - ask for advice from the people you bought the tree from, borrow library books, watch Gardening Australia or do a search on U-Tube.

To create a vase select 3 or 4 branches that are at least 500mm above ground level. Prune them back to an outward pointing bud. Make all branches approximately the same height.

Espalier is labour intensive; however it is a great way to make use of limited space. As well as the normal information sources there are locally available workshops.

If any roots are damaged you will need to prune them at the time of planting.

Fruit trees are generally grafted or budded. This means that a specific fruit variety is joined to a suitable root variety. You should be able to see where the union between the 2 varieties is located so make sure you do not bury this below soil level.



Water

Trees will need to be watered in after planting. The tree will need to be watered during drier times of the year especially during the first couple of years.

Water is important in the process of fruit formation. As a minimum you need to apply water soon after flowering, early summer and as fruit is enlarging before harvest. If planting a number of trees look at putting drip lines either side.

Peaches, apricots and plums need more consistent watering.

Mulching will help conserve water as will increasing organic matter in your soil.

Pest and disease

Keep a close watch on your trees and try to identify any problems that might arise. If you don't have a lot of experience this is something you can learn as you grow your trees.

In the early stages things such as snails and slugs will be a problem if you don't keep weeds under control.

Peaches and nectarines might suffer from peach leaf curl. This requires a copper spray as the leaf and flower buds are swelling. If you find your tree has peach leaf curl then fertilising the tree will help it recover. Cherries might be attacked by pear and cherry slug.

Pruning

Observe the way your tree grows. Do some reading about the variety you are growing and try to differentiate between what are leaf buds and what are buds containing flowers. In the first few years you are trying to establish a frame work for your tree.

The basics of pruning are to remove broken and damaged branches, remove branches that are rubbing against other branches, branches that are growing inwards to the centre of the tree.

Again, do some research to see if flowers (therefore the fruit) is formed on past years growth or new growth to see when we should prune.

Remember it will be several years before you start getting fruit on your trees so you have time to better understand them.

What to do now

Work out how much space you have for planting your fruit trees. Remember there are training systems that allow you to grow fruit in small areas if that is all you have.

Think about what you would like to grow. Remember once you start you can purchase more trees in years ahead, but the sooner you plant the sooner you will be harvesting your fruit.

Order trees

Prepare your planting areas

GO FOR IT!!

Resources

Looking for something a bit different...

Permaculture Melbourne - Heritage Fruits Group

The Heritage Fruits Group was established to save, for future generations, heritage varieties of fruits that are no longer available commercially. Activities have included grafting days, establishment of collections on member's properties, and databases.

In 2000 the Heritage Fruits Group took on the responsibility of managing, documenting and extending the Antique Apple Collection of over 200 varieties of apples at Petty's Orchard, Templestowe, and in recent years the staging of the Annual Apple Tasting Open Day at the Orchard.

Stephen Onians T: 03 9438 6702 minalinka@optusnet.com.au

<http://www.permaculturemelbourne.org.au/index.html>

Rob Pelletier Heritage Fruit Trees

PO Box 35, Beaufort, Victoria 3373, Australia

The Nursery is open by appointment, orders taken on-line

<http://www.heritagefruittrees.com.au/index.html>

CERES Permaculture & Bushfood Nursery

CERES Community Environment Park

Cnr Roberts and Stewart Streets, Brunswick East, Victoria, 3057

T: (03) 9387 4403

The nursery is open seven days a week from 9am until 5pm

<http://www.ceres.org.au/aboutnursery>

Sustainable Gardening Australia article on bush foods. <http://www.sgaonline.org.au/?p=579>

Gardening Australia <http://www.abc.net.au/gardening/>

If you are interested in food, check out these local groups:

Ballarat Community Garden <http://ballaratcommunitygarden.org.au/>

Buninyong Community Garden <http://friendsofroyalpark.org.au/>

Ballarat Permaculture Guild <http://www.ballaratpermacultureguild.org/>

Many Primary Schools now have a kitchen garden; they are often looking for volunteers

Slowfood Ballarat <http://slowfoodballarat.org.au/>

Why is BREAZE running a fruit tree workshop?

Ballarat Renewable Energy and Zero Emissions (BREAZE) is one of Victoria's leading community climate action groups. We aim to achieve zero emissions and a safe climate future through education and community actions. We currently have over 800 members and 1900 email subscribers.

In our Statement of Purpose, we say our aim is to:

To protect and enhance the natural environment and increase environmental sustainability within the region by promoting and developing renewable sources of energy and significantly reducing the region's contribution to greenhouse gas emission.

BREAZE local food group

To help BREAZE achieve these aims we have action groups focused on different areas of interest, Retro-renewables, Engaging & Partnering with Government, Community Engagement & Educations and Local Food.

Why a local food group? Food is something that you consume everyday. Greenhouse Gases are emitted at each stage of food production from growing, processing and packaging, to transportation.

To make local, low emissions food a reality, the BREAZE LFG promote and educate our community around food choices - from understanding food miles, to propagating your own vegetable seeds to hosting a fruit tree workshops.

Why is BREAZE going through Formosa?

BREAZE placed an advert in the Courier seeking expressions of interest from those 'LOCAL' nurseries that would like to collaborate with BREAZE in offering discount fruit trees at the information evening. It wasn't enough that the nursery would be offering a discount, they also had to show their commitment to running their business in a sustainable manner.

Formosa Nursery is a 'Sustainable Gardening Australia' accredited nursery and an accredited 'Water Saver Garden Centre'. They are also undertaking activities to reduce their carbon footprint.

Would you like to know more about BREAZE and local food?

Contact the Local Food Action Group Convenor:

Michele Harvie - michele@breaze.org.au or phone the BREAZE office 5329 1730



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www.breaze.org.au

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