

## Planting & Growing Apple Trees

Apple trees need full sun for proper growth and quality fruit production. At least 6-8 hours of direct sunlight per day is required. Any less time and the trees may become leggy and produce limited flowers. The early morning sun is particularly important since it dries the dew from the leaves, thereby reducing the incidence of diseases. Apples need a second apple tree of a different variety for cross pollination. The cross pollinator should be of a variety that has an overlapping bloom period with the first tree.

Apple planting sites should be free of spring frosts and have good air circulation. Do not plant along fence rows, wooded areas or near the bottom of a hill or low area. Apple trees grow well in a wide range of soil types. They prefer soils with a texture of sandy loam. Soil tests should be taken before planting so that any adjustments can be made to the soil. Prepare the soil by plowing, tilling, or otherwise turning it. Add in organic matter such as aged manure or compost. Lime should be added as recommended by the soil test. If tests are not available, apply 10 pounds of lime per 100 square feet.

### **Planting:**

When plants arrive, they should be planted right away. Otherwise the roots will dry out. If trees cannot be planted within one week, it may be best to "heel in" the plants until the soil is dry enough to prepare for proper planting. To heel in the plants, dig a small trench, water and cover the plants with 2 to 3 inches of soil. Then water every 4 days or so until the trees can be planted.

Before planting, soak the tree roots in water for half an hour. Dig a deep and wide hole to accommodate the root system. Spread the roots before filling the hole. Hold the tree in place so that the grafted union is 2 to 3 inches above

ground level. Cover the roots with the soil mixture and water to settle the soil and eliminate any air pockets. The soil level may drop and more soil will need to be added to bring it up to ground level. Mulch, about 3 inches deep, can then be placed around the tree leaving a well at the base of the plant where mulch does not touch it. After planting, apply water at the rate of two to three gallons per tree every two to three weeks.

Keep an area at least 4 feet away from the tree trunk free of grasses and weeds as they will compete for moisture and nutrients in the soil.

### **Pruning Apple Trees:**

Here is an excellent web page from the Clemson University Extension Office with pictures of correct and incorrect pruning techniques for apple trees.

<http://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheets/HGIC1351.htm>