Pears

Pears are one fruit that grows well in this area if you select varieties suited to the area. Pears however, are not one of nature's inventions but rather have been carefully developed by man over a long period. They are grafted plants which means that the wood from one variety of tree is imbedded on the roots of another type of tree to produce a sort of "combined" tree with hardy root stock and great fruit producing wood. Pomologists (professional fruit specialists) constantly seek to find the best combinations and to develop better trees. So when you buy a variety of pear, the upper part of the tree you see is rather like a clone—it is genetically identical to all the other trees that are called by the same variety name. This is important for you to know that because you may see sprouts coming from the ground around your tree. These are likely sprouts from the root stock tree and you should cut these off.

Pears require two different varieties of pear to pollinate their flowers and set fruit. They are pollinated largely by insects which carry the pollen from flower to flower. They need a different variety, not just a different tree for pollen, so when you buy your pear trees be sure they bloom at the same time!

Most of your grocery store varieties—Bartlett, Bosc and Anjou, for example—are not suited to this area because they are susceptible to a disease called fire blight which is common here. These are European pears which have no natural resistance to fire blight. To combat that problem, our pears are actually hybrids that are crossed with Asian pears to give them fire blight resistance, so you will never get a pear with same texture and taste as your European favorites grown in colder climates. But there are compensations. Asian pears grow well here with few natural diseases and if you have never tasted an Asian pear, you are in for a treat. Crisp like an apple (they are often called apple pears). Asian pears are sweet and just delicious. You can also use Asian pears as a pollinator tree for your hybrid European pears. All of the recommended

varieties we mention here are good pollinators for all the other varieties we recommend here."

We have heard many people frustrated by the fact that they can't tell when their pears are ripe. Strange but true, European pears and European/Asian hybrids do not ripen on the tree! Harvest these pears when fruit changes from hard to firm (about like a softball) and then let them ripen at room temperature which will take about 1-2 weeks. Or, you can refrigerate unripen fruit at 32º and then ripen them later."

We recommend the following varieties:

European/Asian Hybrids:

Orient: Orient has a fair table quality but is slightly unpredictable in granular quality. It ripens in August to early September.

Kieffer. An old favorite, Kieffer has a poor-quality table but is a really good cooking pear. Unfortunately, it has unpredictable granular texture which doesn't become evident until after the tree has matured and produced fruit. It is a very vigorous tree and highly resistant to fire blight which is probably why folks forgive its shortcomings. They ripen in August to early September.

Moonglow: Moonglow provides a good quality table pear and it bears medium to large fruit that ripen in August to early September.

Asian Pears:

Shinko: This is a good quality table pear with a crisp, apple like texture that ripens on the tree. They ripen in late summer to mid fall.

Shin Li: This Asian pear is finely textured, crisp, juicy and sweet. They ripen in late summer to mid fall.

Pear trees are moderated sized when properly pruned and their blossoms are white and very ornamental. Consider one of these lovely trees for your yard. Have the benefit of a real addition to your landscape and fruit, too!"

Fire blight can invade all parts of the tree; symptoms include water-soaked blossoms, wilted, blackened leaves; dark, shriveled fruit; discolored bark; and dead branches. The shoot tips turn black and bend into the shape of a shepherd's crook. Gummy, amber-colored ooze seeps through cracks and pores, containing millions of bacteria, which are spread by insects or rain. Left alone, the infection may kill the tree. Pears are also susceptible to cotton root rot (for which there is no effective fungicidal treatment) and Fabraea leaf spot (perhaps the most significant fungal disease of both pear foliage and fruit, for which some – expensive – fungicides are available).