

Plums



Plums are a wonderful combination of sweet and tart flavors. The flesh is typically sweet while the skin is typically tart. Plums do particularly well in this area and we don't think they are used often enough. They are related to roses, so try to plant where you can enjoy the fragrance. Plums are excellent as fresh fruit, and also as jams, pies and other desserts. Making plum jams requires no pectin since it is boiled down to the gelling point; stop boiling a little sooner than the gelling point and the result is luscious tart sauce that is divine over vanilla pudding or ice cream.

Plums are small trees and so there is always room for one in your yard even if you don't have much space. You can plant bare root (January to February 15) or from a container (January to March 31); note that it should not be fertilized at planting. The typical plum tree will reach a height of about 12 feet and have a spread of about 8 feet; it likes full sun and does best when planted in sandy loam 18' to 20' apart. The ideal plum branches low to the ground. In Europe, these trees are often trained onto walls as espaliers. Plums are pollinated by insects and so the sweet smell of their flowers lures their pollinators but also perfumes your garden in a rich, sweet fragrance in the spring. Plant one where you can enjoy the fragrance.

We recommend the following for this area because they are well suited to the area and also because they do not require a second variety for pollination. They will produce more heavily if they have a second variety but they don't have to have one.

Methley. Methley produces a deep red plum that does not store well but is excellent for fresh eating or for jelly. Methley is self-pollinating but is also an excellent pollinator for other varieties that require a pollinator. It ripens in early June. In addition to its other attributes, its heavy production of spring blossoms smells divine! You will want this one close to the house!

Santa Rosa. Santa Rosa is grown not only as a home fruit but also commercially as market fruit. It is amber colored and good fresh or for preserves. It has a shorter growing season and ripens in June. Santa Rosa is self-pollinating although it will perform better if there is a pollinator available. It is a good pairing with Methley.