



BY CAROLYN HERRIOT

the zero-mile diet

PLAN NOW TO ADD FRUIT TREES THIS YEAR

With proper planting and a little care, you can enjoy an ample harvest from your own mini orchard

In the second year at The Garden Path I planted my first fruit-tree orchard. I was thrilled at the idea of establishing a small orchard on the south-facing lawn. I chose trees on dwarf 2.5- to 3-m (8- to 10-ft.) or semi-dwarf 3- to 3.5-m (10- to 12-ft.) rootstock to make care and harvesting easy.

Fruit trees do best planted in full sun in well-drained, fertile soil. They prefer a neutral soil pH, so are best planted away from stands of evergreens where soil is more acidic. November is a perfect time to plant

dormant fruit trees; they will establish more successfully with winter rain than summer heat. New trees need irrigation in their first year until better established. Adding compost to the planting hole, and regularly as mulch, improves soil with organic matter, which means trees get more nutrients and produce more fruit.

Fruit trees also appreciate seaweed from the beach in winter and wood ash (uncontaminated) from the woodstove as sources of potash. You can apply granular seaweed as kelp meal if you do not live near the ocean.



'Jonagold' apples are prolific when pruned annually.

SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS IN THE ORCHARD

DORMANT OIL/LIME SULPHUR SPRAY

Sunshine with no wind and no sign of rain ahead is the perfect weather condition to dormant spray your fruit trees. The oil dries faster when the sun is shining. Whatever the weather, you must do this before buds open, as dormant oil/lime sulphur spray burns tender young foliage. Spray trees on a dry day with no wind for drift. Cover trunk and limbs on all sides. The oil seeps into crevices in the bark and coats the overwintering egg masses, destroying them.

This combination is effective against a host of problems: rust mites, scale insects, pear scale, red mite eggs, aphid eggs, twig borer, plum black knot and peach leaf curl:

In a 3-qt. (3-L) pressure pump sprayer mix:

- 60 mL (4 Tbsp.) horticultural oil
- 120 mL (8 Tbsp.) lime/sulphur
- Add 3 L (3 qt.) water

TIP: The sulphur stains yellow, so cover foliage plants below your trees with a plastic sheet.

SPRAYING FOR FUNGAL DISEASES

To protect fruit trees against fungal diseases, dormant spray all surfaces of the tree with 30 mL (2 Tbsp.) wettable copper to 4 L (1 gal.) of water. First application at leaf fall; repeat again in December/January.

GREASE BANDS

After spraying, band fruit trees using burlap sacks or strips of old towels, and then smear Tanglefoot™ sticky paste over the bands. This traps crawling insects that lay eggs that hatch into fruit-eating maggots, such as the wingless female winter moth that climbs up fruit trees



HOW TO PLANT A TREE

Fall is a good time to plant fruit trees; winter rain ensures the roots do not dry out.

Planting the tree at the correct level is important. If it is too high, roots may dry out; too deep and the bark on the stem collar may rot, leading to the death of the tree.

- Dig a planting hole no deeper than the height of the rootball. Trees should be

planted so that the point where the roots flare out is near the surface of the soil.

- Dig the size of the hole three times the diameter of the rootball.
- Tease the roots out of the container or spread the roots out of a bare rootball to establish them in the planting hole.
- If roots are injured, cut back to healthy wood before planting to prevent the spread of infection.

TIP: If container stock is rootbound it may be necessary to score around the rootball with a knife to help get new roots established.

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to lay eggs on the branches. The resulting green caterpillars feed on foliage and blossoms the following spring. Tying grease bands around fruit tree trunks keeps the moths out of the tree.

CANKER

Establishing my small orchard was more challenging than expected. I quickly learned that wet coastal conditions (where I live) leave fruit trees prone to canker, symptoms of which show up as damaged, oozing darkened areas of bark. Canker gradually spreads and girdles the entire branch, so once detected it's best to remove infected branches by cutting back to healthy wood. If a branch has to be retained, cut out the cankered part with a sharp knife to remove any diseased bark.

In order to prevent canker, treat with a fixed copper spray when the leaves fall, and repeat once more later in the winter.

TIP: Make sure you disinfect tools with a 10-per cent rubbing-alcohol spray, so that canker does not spread to other trees.

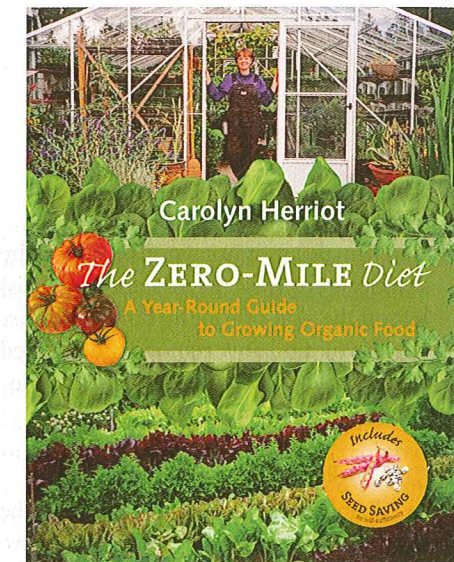
CARDBOARD TRAPS

In spring, wrap strips of corrugated cardboard 15 cm (6 in.) wide, with the corrugated side facing inward, around the trunk and main limbs of apple and pear trees. Check every week for any pupating larvae, which will be wrapped in white silk. Replace the cardboard and bury any infested strips. Keeping up with this through to September will reduce populations considerably.

PHEROMONE TRAPS

The insides of hanging triangular traps are coated with a sticky substance and sprayed with female pheromone, the aim being to attract and trap males.

Traps are also frequently used to monitor moth activity around trees.



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