

Raising fruit in Wyoming

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Fruit in Wyoming? You bet we can grow fruit in Wyoming! With a little care and planning, a wide variety of fruit can be raised in many areas of the state.

When visiting old homesteads in Wyoming, you might be pleasantly surprised to find healthy, productive apple trees. Apple trees can be quite hardy and survive the extremes of Wyoming's climate. Two apple trees are needed for pollination; however, a crab apple can also serve as a pollinator for an apple tree. My favorite apple variety is Haralred – a crisp, juicy, tart fruit good for cold climates. Other varieties to consider are Honeycrisp, Honeygold, Parkland, State Fair, Sweet Sixteen, and Westland. The list can go on and on ... there are so many varieties, and many are grafted on different varieties of rootstock. A variety not known to do well in Wyoming's harsh climate can be grafted to a much hardier variety's rootstock. Nurseries take the roots of a hardy variety of apple tree and graft (attach) the trunk of a different variety to the roots to get the benefits of both trees.

Pears probably came to the New World with the first settlers on the East Coast and spread westward with pioneers. Asian pears were domesticated in China about the same time European pears were in Europe – 3,000 years ago. Try the following European pear varieties: Gourmet, Hardy and Harvest Queen. Pears need a cross-pollinating variety.

Plums and apricots are in the same subgenus, *Prunophora*. Hybrids between plums and apricots have been produced recently that are said to be finer fruits than either parent. Plum varieties that may do well in Wyoming include Pembina, Toka, and Waneta, and apricot varieties include Hargrand and Moorpark. Most European plums are self pollinating, and Japanese and hybrid plums need specific cross pollinator varieties. Most apricots do not need a pollinator; however, many varieties suited for Wyoming do need a cross-pollinator.

There are less than 100 sweet cherry varieties grown in the major production regions around the world. Bing, Napoleon (syn. Royal Ann), Ranier, and Lambert are the most important varieties in North America. These varieties need cross-pollination by a different variety to set fruit. Cross-pollination is necessary for the Bing cherry and often used are the following varieties: Early Burlat, Black Tartarian, and Van. There are a few self-pollinating varieties, such as Stella and Lapins, but they are of poorer quality than Bing and others that form the basis of the industry. These sweet varieties are rated zone 5 and may not grow everywhere in Wyoming. More-adapted for Wyoming are the sour cherry varieties used in pies, such as Montmorency, which is by far the main sour cherry in the United States and Canada, accounting for 99 percent of all production. Also try Meteor or North Star. Sour cherries are self-pollinating.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture zone for northern Wyoming is 4 but I prefer zone 3 or 2, look for varieties of fruit trees to match this rating.

Next, look for fire blight resistance in the chosen variety. Ask your nursery representative about resistance to fire blight. This disease is easy to manage by selecting resistant trees and with spring time preventative treatments.

The later the variety blossoms in spring the better, since late spring frosts can knock off or kill the blossoms resulting in poor fruit production and also look for a early maturing variety. For example, although peach trees can be grown in Wyoming, their flower production is often early and the blossoms – and whatever fruit there would have been – are lost to late frosts.

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