



## FRUIT TREES IN THE GARDEN FOR ALL SEASONS

Growing fruit trees in one's back yard seems to be the norm rather than the exception in Southern California. Subtropical and borderline tropical species perform very well here. However, temperate, often deciduous species, such as apples, pears, cherries, plums, peaches and apricots can be somewhat more challenging because they don't receive enough chill hours during our warm winters.

One chill hour is equivalent to one hour below 45°F. Accumulation of hours typically begins in November and continues until nighttime temperatures are above the threshold. Chilling is typically required to meet a dormancy threshold; if a tree does not meet the minimum hours of chilling it will flower and fruit poorly. Fruit trees in Northern California can accumulate from 800 to 1,500 chill hours, while trees in Southern California are likely to amass only 100 to 400. Species and cultivars with low-chill requirements are considered "low-chill" selections.

Chilling requirements and tolerances were a major consideration when we selected and sited the trees in the redesigned Garden for All Seasons. The north end of this garden is about 9 feet higher in elevation than the south end. This gradient allows cold air to move, or drain, down slope making the north end warmer and the south end colder during winter. Hence, borderline tropical and subtropical selections were planted north of the pond (arbitrary central dividing line) and cold tolerant and cold requiring species and cultivars were selected for south of the pond. We focused on trees requiring less than 250 to 300 chill hours. All of these considerations were painstakingly accounted for so that we could provide the broadest possible palette of fruit trees, some of which are described here.

*Casimiroa sapota* 'Suebelle' (white sapote); a semi-dwarf evergreen selection to about 12'; as easy to grow as citrus; fruits have custard-like flavor and texture; lends itself to being blended with milk or ice cream to make shakes.

*Eugenia uniflora* 'Vermillion' (Surinam cherry); an evergreen selection; can produce up to five crops a year; hardy to 28°F with virtually no chill requirement; highly glossy, deeply ribbed fruits change from lime green to yellow to orange and finally to vermillion when ripe.

*Above: To the north of the garden, borderline tropical and subtropical fruit trees find a home because the winter temperature there is warmer than in the south end.*

*Feijoa sellowiana* 'Likvard's Pride' (pineapple guava); a rare selection with fruits more than 3-inches long and average weight of 3 ounces and up to 5 ounces.

*Mangifera indica* 'Alphonso' (mango); a semi-dwarf evergreen selection; considered to be one of the most flavorful and famous mangoes in India; flesh is virtually fiber-less.

*Morus macroura* 'King White' (white mulberry); easy-to-grow variety that produces fruit precociously; fruits are candy-like and so sweet they often measure off the Brix scale for sugar content; flavor reminiscent to honeydew melon.

*Myrciaria cauliflora* (jaboticaba); slow-growing tree to 12' with attractive, flaking, mottled bark; performs equally well in a container or in the ground; may produce fruits to three times per year; spherical, dark purple to black, plum-like fruits are borne on the tree branches and trunks; fruits are sweet with a little acid aftertaste, excellent for jams and jellies.

*Prunus avium* 'Minnie Royal' (low-chill sweet cherry [pollen source]) & *P. avium* 'Royal Lee' (low-chill sweet cherry [fruiting cultivar]); planted as a pair to insure pollination; this adaptable cherry has the lowest chill requirement of any cherry making it an excellent choice for Southern California; tree can be maintained at 10' and begins fruiting at about 5'; fruits have excellent flavor and very high sugar content.

*Punica granatum* 'Smith' PP16,578 (Angel Red® pomegranate); this is a new variety from Monrovia Growers; it produces abundant, bright red fruits with soft seeds.

*Vitis vinifera* x *V. labrusca* 'Priceless' (grape); American hybrid table grape that is excellent for Southern California; disease resistant vines begin producing the first year; complex, rich flavor with Concord-like characteristics but sweeter and without the tough chewy skin. 🍇

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