

Ken Muir's Guide to Growing Apricots



Richly flavoured and delicious, apricots need a warm sheltered situation to succeed. In colder regions of the U.K. they should only be grown under glass. They flower very early, so frost protection may be necessary. They are self-fertile, so only one tree needs to be grown but hand pollination using a soft brush or rabbit's tail may be necessary as there may be few pollinating insects around at flowering time.

TREE FORMS

Although often associated with peaches, apricots in fact have a similar growth habit to plums and so can be pruned and trained in the same way (click here to view). In most areas they will only crop well if grown as a fan (click here for information on training) on a

warm south, south-west or west facing wall or fence but in warmer parts of the country they can be grown as bushes or pyramids. Apricots are grown on St. Julien 'A' rootstock. As a fan, a space of about 4.5m (15ft) wide by 2.1-2.4m (7-8ft) high is required. Pyramids should be spaced 3.0-3.6m (10-12ft) apart and bushes 3.6-4.5m (12-15ft) apart.

FRUIT THINNING

Thinning should be carried out gradually, starting when the fruits are the size of hazelnuts. Remove small, misshapen and awkwardly placed fruit to leave fruits 7.5-10cm (3-4in) apart.

MANURING

In early February each year, broadcast over the rooting area:

*35g/m² (1¼oz/yd²) of sulphate of potash,
and 25g/m² (1oz/yd²) of Nitro-Chalk (calcium ammonium nitrate)
or sulphate of ammonia;*

and every third year:

70g/m² (2½oz/yd²) of superphosphate.

Alternatively, a compound fertilizer such as Ken Muir's 'Fruit Tree, Cane, Vine & Bush Feed' may be used following the manufacturer's recommendations.

HARVESTING & STORAGE

Apricots should be picked for dessert when fully coloured and ripe, when they part easily from the spur. They will require picking over several times. Apricots can be picked slightly under-ripe for jam, cooking or bottling. They will not keep for any length of time.