



## Ken Muir Guide To Growing Cherries



Sweet cherries crop best under conditions of light rainfall (in areas of high rainfall they are prone to splitting). They do best on a deep, fertile, well-drained soil but will tolerate a range of soil types provided it is well drained and ideally 60cm (2ft) or more in depth. Cherries flower early and so require a sheltered position and may need protection against spring frosts.

The biggest disadvantage of sweet cherries in the past has been that they make very large fruit trees. However, Ken Muir's trees are grafted onto the dwarfing rootstock Gisela 5 and only a small tree is produced, around 2m

(6ft 6in). Acid cherries do not grow as large as sweet cherries and are therefore grafted onto the more vigorous Colt rootstock so that the ultimate height is the same.

If you have a small garden, certain varieties are available as Minarette fruit trees which are ideal as they can be planted as close as 90cm (3ft) apart.

The introduction of self-fertile cherries has been a great improvement as now only one need be grown which is important where space is limited. These were first developed in Canada and several varieties are now available.

### **TRAINING SYSTEMS**

#### **Sweet Cherries**

Sweet cherries fruit on spurs on the older wood and at the base of the one year old laterals. Because of this they can be trained and pruned in the same way as plums ([click here for more information](#)). They can be grown as a Minarette, pyramid or bush in more favoured areas but in cool areas are best grown as a fan on a warm south, south-west or west facing wall or fence. Fan training is carried out in the same way as you would fan train a plum tree ([click here for further information](#)) and has the benefit of making the tree easier to protect from birds.

Cherries on Gisela 5 can be spaced around 2.4-3m (8-10ft) apart for pyramids and 3-3.6m (10-12ft) apart for bushes; on Colt they should be spaced 3.6-4.5m (12-15ft) apart for pyramids and 4.5-5.4m (15-18ft) apart for bushes. Fans on Gisela 5 need a space of at least 1.8m (6ft) high by 3.6m (12ft) wide (the size of two fence panels); on Colt, 2.4m (8ft) by 4.5m (15ft) is necessary.

## Acid Cherries

The Morello cherry is more hardy than sweet cherries and is an ideal subject for growing as a fan on a north-facing wall or fence. It can be grown as a pyramid or a bush in sheltered situations. The cropping habit of the Morello is like that of the peach, bearing its fruit on wood made the previous year. Because of this it is grown in much the same way ([click here for further information](#)).

Pyramids should be spaced around 2.4-3m (8-10ft) apart and bushes 3-3.6m (10-12ft) apart. Fans need a space of at least 1.8m (6ft) high by 3.6m (12ft) wide (the size of two fence panels). The initial training of a fan trained Morello cherry is the same as for plums ([click here to view](#)). From the third summer, however, it should be treated the same as you would a fan trained peach ([click here for further details](#)).

## MANURING

In early February each year broadcast over the rooting area:

*35g/m<sup>2</sup> (1¼oz/yd<sup>2</sup>) of sulphate of potash,  
and 50g/m<sup>2</sup> (1¾oz/yd<sup>2</sup>) of Nitro-Chalk (calcium ammonium nitrate)  
or sulphate of ammonia;*

and every third year:

*70g/m<sup>2</sup> (2½oz/yd<sup>2</sup>) of Superphosphate.*

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