



Quince & Medlar Cultural Instructions



Quince and medlars make attractive as well as fruitful trees. They grow best in the south of the country and need a warm, sheltered position if they are to do well. The true quince (*Cydonia oblonga*) is an attractive tree with large pink, dog-rose type flowers and beautiful golden fruit. The fruit is hard, acid, and astringent and so cannot be eaten raw but is excellent for jelly and flavouring apple pies.

A relative of the quince and hawthorn, the medlar (*Mespilus germanica*) makes an attractive tree of weeping habit with large white flowers. The fruit resembles a large, russety rose hip and is eaten when 'bled', i.e. partially rotted. It has a pleasant caramel flavour and can also be made into jelly.

TRAINING SYSTEMS

Quince have a lax irregular growth habit and so are best grown as bushes. A bush will grow to about 3.6-4.5m (12-15ft) in height and spread and should be spaced 3.6-4.5m (12-15ft) apart.

Pruning is carried out in the dormant season (November-March) and initial pruning is like that for an apple or pear. A mature tree does not require a lot of detailed pruning. The removal or shortening of crossing, crowding, dead, diseased or broken branches each winter is all that is necessary

Medlars, on the other hand, are best grown as a standard or half-standard to allow them to produce an attractive, somewhat weeping head. They should be spaced about 4.5-5.4m (15-18ft) apart. Pruning is carried out in the dormant season (November-March).

Initial pruning is similar to that for a bush apple or pear but pruning the main stem higher to about 1.35m (4ft 6in) for a half-standard and 1.8m (6ft) for a standard. A mature tree does not require regular pruning, but dead, diseased, crowding and crossing branches should be shortened or removed in the winter as necessary.

MANURING

In early February each year broadcast over the rooting area:

25g/m² (1oz/yd²) of sulphate of potash;

and in late February for medlars:

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

and for quince:

*70g/m² (2½oz/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 may be used annually following the manufacturers recommendations.

If magnesium deficiency is a persistent problem, in early April each year apply:

50g/m² (1¾oz/yd²) of magnesium sulphate (Epsom salts).

HARVESTING

Quince should be left on the tree as long as possible until late October when they become golden coloured; they must however be harvested before the arrival of any air frosts. They can be stored under cool conditions until the end of the year but should be regularly inspected for rotting.

Medlars should be harvested in late October. The stalks should be dipped in a strong salt solution to prevent premature rotting and the fruits placed with their stalks upwards in a cool, dry place for two to three weeks until the flesh softens and turns brown.

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