



# Sierra View Nursery Inc.

## Apple Tree Care

Apple trees prefer well-drained, sandy loam soils. It is also very important to keep your trees in full sunlight as this will allow them to grow vigorously, and ultimately, produce the best fruit. Be careful to avoid frost pockets when planting as these will damage your fruit.

Apple trees require a cross-pollinator and a certain amount of chill hours to produce fruit. If your tree does not get either of these elements it will fail to produce an edible crop. Please refer to each apple tree product for pollination and chill hour requirements specific for that variety.

Depending on the landscape, and what your uses may be for your apple trees, try spacing them 15-20 feet apart. No more than 20 feet to ensure the trees cross pollinate.

### Planting

Dig a hole twice the width of the size of the pot, and just as deep as the root ball. The dirt that you have taken out of the hole should be well mixed 50/50 with our **organic compost**. When you remove the plant from the pot, be careful not to hurt the root ball, and gently place it into to your freshly dug hole. To avoid burying to deep, make sure your plant is positioned with the topmost roots at the soil line. Once your tree has been placed in the hole, start filling it in with the 50/50 mix, and push lightly to pack it in. Your apple tree should be watered thoroughly for the roots to settle and to eliminate air pockets. The best soil for apple trees is **slightly acidic (pH 6.0-6.8)**.

### Watering

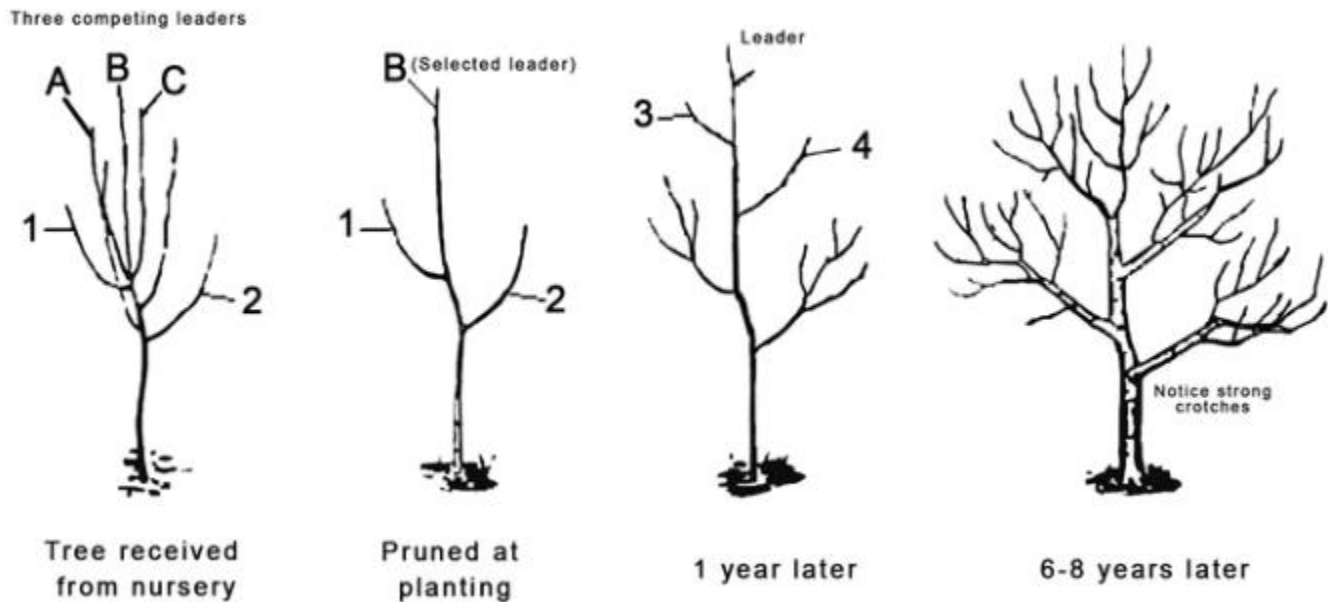
During the first year, the tree is considered newly established, meaning it is very critical for your plant to be watered. On light/sandy soil water 2x a week, but on clay soil 1x a week will do. When watering your tree be sure to soak the root system entirely. Whether you have a sophisticated automatic irrigation system, or are just using a watering can or bucket, it is better to water periodically and allow the soil to dry out a bit between waterings. Fruit trees do not expect to be growing in perpetually wet soil. Over-watering can be just as harmful as lack of watering. Always take rainwater into account before deciding to water your tree by hand/irrigation.

Once the tree is established, it should receive at least one inch of water each week. After the first year you don't need to be quite as vigilant as the tree will have established its root system. As a rule of thumb, the period when fruit trees need most water is just before, during, and just after the blossom period (about 6 weeks in total) and in the period leading up to the harvest. Water regularly, especially during dry spells. Lack of rain/water can cause fruit to prematurely drop if not well irrigated during the dry spell.

## Pruning

To create the strongest and healthiest tree, it should be pruned to an open center habit. At the time of planting, select 2-4 scaffold branches spaced equally around the trunk and clip the other branches flush with the trunk. During the second dormant season, top the scaffold branches 36 inches away from the trunk to encourage secondary branching. The tree must have good air circulation in the interior. Pruning should continue for the next five years to train the tree to grow upward and outward by thinning out crossing limbs.

The branches should be thinned out and cut back long shoots as needed to maintain tree shape. Remove the water sprouts (suckers). If left unpruned the tree will start to get bushy and lack vigor, therefore producing small fruit and inferior quality apples. While pruning, remove any dead, damaged, or diseased branches.



## Fertilizing

You can use either traditional, organic or a hybrid mix fertilizer for your apple tree. *Lily Miller's All-Purpose Planting and Growing Food* (hybrid) or *Down To Earth Fruit Tree* (Organic) are both excellent choices and will deliver the required nutrients. Be sure to evenly spread fertilizer under the entire canopy of your tree, avoiding a 5-inch area closest to the trunk. After fertilizing, be sure to water your tree. Depending on the age of your plant, application of the fertilizer should be adjusted.

### WHEN TO FERTILIZE APPLE TREES:

In USDA Zones 8-10: Fertilize 3x a year— in late February, late May, and late July/early August.