

Portstone

GARDEN CENTRE

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J u l y

FRUIT TREES start coming into the garden centre at the beginning of July. There are many varieties to choose from, with many available on dwarf rootstock which keeps the tree small and suitable for the home garden. Other ways of keeping trees small, is to plant 2 or 3 in the one hole. The root competition restricts growth. This is a good method to adopt where you need two varieties for pollination.

Planting trees in a container, such as a half wine barrel, or in a Bonsai Bag if you want the tree in the ground, will also restrict the tree size.

Pruning, harvesting and covering with bird netting, are all easier with a small tree. Plant fruit trees in a sheltered sunny corner of your garden for best production. It pays to improve the soil prior to planting with compost and general fertilizer, but on the whole deciduous trees can tolerate a wide range of soil types.

Dig a hole much bigger than the rootball, then mix the soil and compost together. Spread the roots out carefully before backfilling the hole and compacting the soil to ensure there are no air pockets.

Make sure the graft is well above ground.

Deciduous trees need to be staked, so put in two stakes, one either side of the tree, and use flexible ties. Water well at planting and soak deeply at least once a week for the first year.

Winter is also a good time to prune fruit trees for shape and continued vigour.

Unpruned trees gradually start to produce lower yields. Use clean, sharp secateurs or loppers to remove any crossing branches or diseased wood.

Time to plant GARLIC. Like most bulbs, garlic needs fertile, free- draining soil. In heavy soil, the cloves are liable to rot before they sprout. Only plant the fattest, healthiest cloves from around the outside of the bulb, leaving the rest to use in the kitchen.

Plant each unpeeled clove pointy end up and don't bury too deeply.

Feed well throughout the growing season with a fish based fertilizer. They will be ready to harvest around Christmas.

STRAWBERRY plants are in store now. They are best grown in vertical space, in hanging baskets, pots with side pockets, wire towers or whatever your imagination can create. This method keeps the ripening fruit off the damp ground and also makes it harder for the birds to get to before you. Add some pansies or violas when planting, to brighten up the display. Feed well with Mycorrcin.

Spend dreary winter days planning and reading the new seasons KINGS SEED catalogue, and order what you want for your spring garden.