

Heritage Apple Trees – locally grafted by Forest Garden Produce.

Apples are some of the easiest fruit to grow, and once established can produce excellent fruit for many years. These trees are quality, recognised varieties which have shown to grow well in the local (Sheffield, NE Derbyshire) climate. They have been grafted onto disease resistant rootstocks of various types to determine the overall size that the mature tree will reach. These are “Maiden whips” (single stems growing straight up with no side branches) and are in pots so ready for planting in their final position.

If you would like me to source your favourite apple variety and have it ready for Autumn 2023 please contact me and I will do my best!

Choose your rootstock

M27 – very-dwarfing. Suitable for containers.

M9 – dwarfing. For small gardens, containers and training as espaliers.

M26 – semi-dwarfing. Suitable for small gardens, training and orchards

MM106 – moderate vigour. For larger gardens & orchards

Plant your tree

Choose a sunny spot. Simply dig a hole as deep as the pot and at least twice to three times the diameter. If the soil is anything like reasonable there is no need to add any compost. Unpot the tree and place in the hole adding soil back to the same level as it was in the pot. The main consideration in the early years is to keep an area at least half a metre in diameter around the tree free of competing grass. Mulch with woodchip or even by covering the soil with waste cardboard and covering with woody garden waste or well rotted compost. This will help feed the fungal and other micro organisms in the soil network which work so beneficially with the tree. In very dry years it may be necessary to water but ideally a tree will be left to find its water and send down appropriate roots.

Its not always necessary to provide a stake to support the tree, except perhaps in windy exposed locations. However, the dwarfing rootstocks (M9 and M27) will have less deep roots and will need to have a stout cane or post to support them. Put the stake in your hole before planting and secure the tree when planted with a tree tie. (Provided with your trees when on M27 or M9 rootstock).

If growing in a container make sure you have an M27 or M9 rootstock. Choose a container at least 50cm in diameter and with “crops” in the bottom (broken pot or stones to add drainage fill with compost and some grit/sand again to aid drainage. Plant as above with a cane for support placed firmly to the base of the container.

A Word on Pollination.

To crop well many apple trees need a pollination partner – a local tree in the same pollination or adjacent pollination group. However, in urban settings there may be other local trees or crab apple trees which provide good pollination partners. If in doubt check

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It's Easy to Prune.

In the early years you will prune in the Autumn/Winter when the tree is in dormancy (its lost its leaves and gone into its winter slumber). Pruning at this time encourages vegetative growth the next season which help establish the framework of branches that you want. Later, once established pruning will be mainly in the late summer to reduce this extension growth of branches and encourage more fruiting buds to form – the fruit being what you want!

First Autumn/Winter pruning on the Maiden Whips. One simple snip with your secateurs! Approximately 50-75cm above the ground make one downward facing cut above a strong leaf bud. Next year the 3-4 buds below this cut should produce shoots which will become the initial structural branches of your tree. The “leader” (top shoot) will continue to grow vertically which again will be cut back in thr Autumn year 2 to form the next level of structural branches. If training the tree into an espalier shape you can refer to more on-line help (see below)

Fun Future Options

Once your tree is established, in 2 or 3 years, it is possible to graft other varieties onto it to ideally give apples which will ripen earlier and later than the main variety to extend your apple season. Its fun to have a go and in my experience it's a lot simpler than it sounds. See some of the resources below for help and advice.

Training further trees is also an option and an espalier, step-over or cordon is an ideal way to get more trees into a small space. Just a fence or wall of six or so feet long will provide the space for a tree which can be productive as well as decorative.

Further Resources.

There is a plethora of on-line help and advice. Here are some suggested sources:

RHS: [How to grow apples: RHS advice / RHS Gardening](#)

The PJ taste blog:

Excellent Youtube videos from Stephen Hayes who from 1992 with his wife planted an orchard in Hampshire.

People's Trust for Endangered Species:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLfH3UG7XK7Jg8UBQ08hEa50SOq5txirAc>

Notes form a keen allotment grower: www.orchardnotes.com