

Soft Fruit for the Chinook Zone

Reliable producers, hardy and ornamental in the smaller and larger landscape

Growing your own:

- Superior quality

- Can choose varieties for superior flavour

- Some hardy fruits are unavailable commercially

- Helps maintain genetic diversity and heritage varieties bred for the prairies

Challenges:

- Not that many mostly weather related

 - Poor snow cover, late spring snow, late spring frosts

 - Cool springs, strong winds and hail

- Deciding what to grow in limited space

- Finding compatible cultivars for pollination

- Biggest problem is keeping the birds from stealing all of the fruit

Pollination:

- Lack of is the biggest reason for poor production as pollinators are grounded

- Most fruit require cross pollination, timing of different shrubs flowering is critical

Pollinating Tips

- Research pollinating needs of fruit type

- Encourage native pollinators by including early blooming bulbs and perennials

- Choose cultivars with similar bloom times, late blooming cultivars

- Arrange fruiting shrubs in communities to provide shelter

- Avoid use of chemicals

Pruning Goals:

- Keep an open center to allow good air circulation and light

- Thin out crossing, dead and old less vigorous wood

- Control height by heading back tall shoots

- Remove excess suckers

Siting:

- Most shrub fruits are tolerant of less than ideal conditions

- Many are good candidates for edible hedges

- Avoid sites with standing water in Spring (except Haskaps)

Chums: *Prunus pumila var besseyi* x *Prunus salicina*

- Hybrids between Japanese plums and western sandcherries

- Best in soil of average fertility but low in organic matter

- Fruit is the size of a small plum, is sweet and very tasty

- Require cross pollination with another Chum, or wild plum

 - (*Prunus nigra* or *Prunus americana*)

- Are early flowering so pollination can be a problem

- Prune out 10-15% of wood each year to promote circulation and fruiting

Varieties: Dura, Manor, Compass, New Oka
-hardest and best for production
-ripens late August
-may experience some tip kill during the winter

Sapa, Opata, Zeta
-may experience some tip kill
-not as hardy so site carefully

Pincherries: *Prunus pensylvanica*

Native shrub to the prairies
Fruit is small and very tart but makes superb preserves, pies and jellies
Can be pruned as small tree or multi-stemmed large shrub
Like to form thickets

Chokecherries: *Prunus virginiana*

Large native shrubs with small dark blue, red or yellow astringent fruit
Can be trained as small trees or multi-stemmed large shrubs
Suckers

Very easy care reliable decorative shrub

Varieties commonly available:

Boughen, Robert, Garrington

Black Knot Fungus: most *Prunus species* are susceptible

Characterized by thick black irregular swellings
Infects trees in the spring at bud emergence. Very infectious.
First year small brown swellings, usually missed
Next year swellings are olive green and velvety
By end of season black swellings are noted on branches
Prune out at least 20 cm back from knot, sterilize tools between cuts,
-do not compost, burn or dispose of in garbage

Sour Cherries: *Prunus cerasus* x *Prunus fruticosa*

Romance series of cherries developed by University of Saskatchewan
Are hybrids between European sour cherries and Mongolian cherries
Have a high Brix rating but tempered by high acidity
Require two varieties for cross pollination
Needs full sun, drought tolerant once established, dislikes competition from grass
Good for larger edible hedges
Hit main production at 5 years

Varieties:

Carmine Jewel- earliest to ripen, small pit
Crimson Passion- largest and sweetest
Romeo- very heavy producer
Juliet- deemed best tasting
Valentine- largest bush, bright red with pink flesh
Cupid- largest fruit, best used for processing

Nanking Cherries: *Prunus tomentosa*

Exceptionally hardy and ornamental shrub with pale pink flowers

Make great hedges but requires another shrub for pollination

Small red fruit is very juicy and sweet with a large pit

Makes excellent jelly and juice or eating fresh

-requires a pectin source

Is a white fruited variety but hard to find

Haskap Berries: *Lonicera caerulea var. edulis*

Very hardy ornamental shrubs that are the first to bloom in the spring

Flower buds are hardy to -7C

Berries are oblong, dark blue with a variable tart to sweet taste, ripen late June

Like to be flooded early spring but drought tolerant after

University of Saskatchewan has a breeding program

Varieties: Borealis, Tundra, 9-15, 9-91, 9-92, Honeybee, Berry Blue, Svetlana, Cinderella, Polaris, Blue Belle, Indigo series

Pollination can be an issue so are often sold with a compatible pollinator in the same pot

Honeybee pollinates: Indigo series, Tundra, Borealis

Aurora, Berry Blue, Cinderella are universal pollinators

Aurora has the large sweet fruit and is best of the pollinators

Harvesting: berries are produced underneath the shrub and fall off easily

Place a blanket, plastic pool or umbrella underneath and shake the bush

Blueberries: *Vaccinium* species and hybrids

Are several species hardy here but difficult to grow because of soil pH requirements

Best grown in a pot where cultural conditions can be manipulated

Require another variety for cross pollination

Varieties:

Highbush: Chippewa, Northsky, Northcountry

Low Bush: Northblue, Polaris

Groundcover: Little Crisp, Baby Blue

Novelty: Pink Lemonade and Tophat- suitable for containers

Saskatoons: *Amelanchier canadensis*

Prairie native large to medium sized shrub

Fruiting is variable due to spring weather and moisture

Once established is drought tolerant, suckers moderately, bird sown seedlings

Not fussy about soil

Requires two varieties for good pollination, fruit ripens mid summer

Prune to keep an open center

Diseases: susceptible to a rust fungus that ruins berries

Junipers and hawthornes are alternate hosts so should avoid growing them near each other

Varieties: Thiessen, Smokey, Pembina, Northline, Honeywood, JB-30

University of Saskatchewan has a breeding program

Currants: *Ribes species*

Related to gooseberries but thornless, come in black, red or white berries

Smaller shrubs that prefer half day sun with late day shade, moist soil

Susceptible to powdery mildew so ensure good air circulation

Varieties: Red Lake, White Pearl

Black currants: Ben series

Nevis, Lomond, Hope, Alder, Conan, Sarek, Tirran

Pruning:

Red and White: fruit is produced on two and three year old wood

Goal is to have an even number of 1,2,3 year old wood

Remove all 4 year old wood

Black: fruit is produced on 1 year old wood

Need to prune back all shoots to 6 inches at planting

Next season select 6-8 vigorous shoots and prune out others

Goal is to have an even mix of 1,2,3 year old wood, remove 4 year old wood

Gooseberries: *Ribes grossularia* x *Ribes hirtellum*

Very hardy, spiny, ornamental self layering small shrubs

Not fussy about soil, prefers sun with afternoon shade

May require supplemental water during dry spells

Are self pollinating and early flowering, flower buds hardy to -5C

Fruit is very high in Vitamins A,C,B, phosphorus and iron

Powdery mildew can be a problem so prune for air circulation

Remove lower branches to prevent layering

Prune similar to black currant

Varieties: Pixwell, Thoreson, Invicta, Welcome, Hinnomaki Red and Yellow (thornless)

harder to find: Sabine, Sebastian, Selby (Ag Canada)

Spineless (Boughen Nurseries), Leafland, Prickly Pear, John's Prairie

Sea Buckthorn: *Hippophae rhamnoides*

New varieties from Russia, fruit has a citrus taste and has several healthy qualities

Fruit is produced on two year old branches

Requires male and female plants, wind pollinated

Tolerates a wide variety of conditions, very drought tolerant, spiny

Varieties: Indian Summer, Botanica, Russian Orange, Siberian Splendor, Star of Alti

Highbush Cranberries: *Viburnum trilobum*

Large ornamental shrubs with bright red berries that can be dried

Prefers partial shade and consistent moisture

Raspberries: *Rubus species*

Easiest and most reliable fruit on the prairies

Are biennial and primocane (first year) fruiting varieties

Fruit is very soft so needs to be picked regularly, does not store long

Pruning: need to thin canes to 3-5 one year old canes and 3-5 current year canes

Primocanes: cut to the ground each spring (not as hardy)

Staking: canes will be more productive if they are staked and trimmed back

Varieties: Boyne, Red Mammoth, Madawaska, Red River and Pathfinder (both primocane), Royalty Purple, Fall Gold

Strawberries: *Fragaria* hybrids

Come in 4 types:

June bearing: one large crop mid summer, lots of runners

-Kent, Cabot and Veestar

-Remove runners and flowers first year

-Best grown in the matted row style

Day neutral: smaller fruit but produced throughout the season

Tristar and Fort Laramie

Everbearing: one crop in summer another in late summer

Ogallala

-Both day neutrals and everbearing have few runners and are best grown in the hill style

Alpine: small berries produced continuously through the summer

Strawberry plants should be replaced every 3-5 years

Are susceptible to :botrytis and grey mold (mulch plants to keep fruit off the ground)

-Catfacing- due to inconsistent moisture

Remove all leaves prior to freeze up

Grapes: *Vitis riparia* x *Vitis labrusca*

Need a warm sunny spot, well drained average soil

Easy to grow but challenging to get fruit to ripen as needs hot temperatures

Fruit stops ripening once picked so test a grape before picking cluster

Easily propagated by cuttings

Requires serious pruning to control rampant growth and increase fruit production

Fruits on previous seasons wood

Prune similar to espalier limiting number of lateral and vertical shoots

Water in well the first three years then is very drought tolerant due to deep roots

Varieties: Valiant, Beta, Frontenac, Kandiyohi, Kay Gray, Prairie Star

Kiwi: *Actinidia arguta* and *Actinidia kolomikta*

Prefers protection from afternoon sun, likes consistent moisture

Heavy feeders especially nitrogen

Shallow rooted so mulch heavily

Vines are vigorous so prune as an espalier limiting lateral shoots and pruning for preferred height

Requires 1 male for every 3 females for pollination

Fruit production begins at 4-5 years

Fruit is like a large smooth green grape, very sweet

Goji berry: *Lycium barbarum*

Hailed as the new super food

-high in antioxidants, Vitamin C, beta carotene, fibre

Should not be eaten by people on blood thinners or on diabetic medications

Grows as a large arching shrub with dangling orange berries

Flowers are a pretty purple born along the branches

Prefers alkaline soil, cool climates, shade from afternoon sun

Begins fruiting 3 years after planting

If grown in containers will fruit in two years

Requires pruning:

Remove bottom branches up to 24 inches

Remove upper branches to desired height, encourages lateral branches that fruit

Remove vertical branches as do not produce fruit

Provide protection until established

Compiled by Elaine Rude

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