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# Cherries

**Botanical name:** *Prunus avium* (Sweet Cherries) *Prunus cerasus* (Sour Cherries)

**Plant type:** [Fruit](#)

**USDA Hardiness Zones:** [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#)

**Sun exposure:** [Full Sun](#)

**Soil type:** [Any](#)

**Soil pH:** [Slightly Acidic to Neutral](#)

Sweet cherries are the ones most often found in markets. They have a thick, rich, and almost plumb-like texture. Traditionally, sweet cherry trees are self-sterile and best for an orchard or a large garden. You'll need at least two or three trees so that they can pollinate each other. However, a recent and exciting development in sweet cherries is the dwarf self-pollinating "Stella." (See image below.)

Sour cherries are not usually eaten raw, but are widely used for preserves and other cooking uses. Sour cherries are much smaller than sweet cherries and all varieties are self-fertile.

Standard-size trees start bearing fruit in their fourth year and can produce 30 to 50 quarts of cherries each year.

## Planting

- For sweet cherries, make sure the different varieties will pollinate each other.
- Plant sweet cherries in late fall or early winter if grown outside, or at any time if container grown.
- When planting fan-trained trees, construct the necessary supports before planting.
- Space fanned trees 15 to 18 feet apart.
- Planting for sour cherries is the same as for sweet cherries, however, space bushes and fans only 12 to 15 feet apart.

## Care

- Thinning is not necessary.
- Apply mulch to retain moisture.
- Drape netting over trees to protect the fruit from birds.
- Water routinely in dry areas.
- There is no difference in care between sour and sweet cherries.

## Harvest/Storage

- Pick fruits with stalks when fully ripe.
- Eat or cook immediately.
- Pick fruits when firm if they are to be frozen.
- Hand-picking may injure the shoots and cause infection; Cut the stalks with scissors.