

6655 North Hwy 3  
Greenview, CA  
96037  
(530) 468-2434



1536 Lucas Road  
Yreka, CA  
96097  
(530) 842 - 6801

Passionate for Pets, Plants & People

# Plums

Botanical name: Prunus

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

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

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

**Bloom time:** [Summer, Fall](#)

Plums are a good choice for beginner gardeners who want to grow fruit trees. Plum trees are widely adapted, more compact, and require less treatment than most fruit trees. Not only are plums delicious, but the trees themselves add beauty to any garden.

## Planting

- Be prepared to plant more than one type of plum tree because many types require cross-pollination to produce fruit, although there are some varieties that can produce fruit on their own.
- It is also important to choose a type that will work with your location. There are three categories of plum trees: European, Japanese, and Damson. Hardy European types work in most regions across the U.S. The Japanese types flourish where peach trees flourish. There are also American hybrids that work well in regions where neither European or Japanese types flourish.
- Plant plum trees in well-drained, moderately fertile soil in full sun. Avoid planting in low areas where frost may settle, as the frost will damage your trees.
- For container-grown trees, remove the plant from its pot and remove any circling roots by laying the root ball on its side and using shears to cut through the roots.
- For grafted trees, keep the graft union 1 inch above the soil line when planting.
- Dig a hole that is a few inches deeper and wider than the spread of the roots. Set the tree on top of a small mound of soil in the middle of the hole. Be sure to spread the roots away from the trunk without excessively bending them.
- Space standard-size trees 20 to 25 feet apart. Space dwarf trees 15 to 20 feet apart.

## Care

- Be sure to water the young trees heavily every week during the first growing season to help promote growth.
- If you have a Japanese type of tree, the best pruning method is to create an open center shape. In the summer of the first year, cut the vigorous shoots that form on the top of the tree by two or three buds. After about a month, check the tree. As soon as you have three wide-angled branches, spaced equally apart, cut back any other branches so that these three are the main branches. In the early summer of the second year, cut back the branches in the middle of the tree to short stubs and prune any shoots developing below the three main branches. After the third year, remove any shoots in the center of the tree to keep its shape.
- Japanese types require heavy pruning to help keep them in shape and to produce better fruit. It is also good to thin out the fruit on these types of trees. You should space the plums about 3 to 4 inches apart on each branch.
- If you have a European type of tree, the best pruning method is to create a central leader. This shape features a central trunk with branches that spiral out every 5 to 8 inches, making sure that no branch is directly above another. The training for such a system begins in the early summer of the first year, during which time you should remove any shoots that form within 18 inches of the ground. The end result should resemble a Christmas tree.
- European types do not require fruit thinning because they do not produce as much fruit as Japanese types. However, the fruit on these types should be spaced about 2 inches apart on each branch.

•To help control pests and diseases, remember to prune your trees to keep them open. You can also mulch around the trees in the spring to help control weeds, but be sure to remove the mulch in the late fall so that no pests use it over the winter. You can also lightly cultivate the soil around your trees in late spring to eliminate any pests in the soil.

## Harvest/Storage

- Harvest plums when they are ripe. You can tell when plums are ripe by applying gentle pressure with your fingers. If the skin of the fruit feels soft, then it is ready to be picked.
- Plums should come off the tree easily when you're using only a slight twist.
- You can also pick the fruit when they are still slightly firm and store them in a cool place to fully ripen.
- The best place to store plums is in the refrigerator. The best temperature for storing plums is about 31°F; if kept at this temperature, plums may last for 2 to 4 weeks.
- You can also store plums by making [jams or jellies](#).
- Plums can also be stored by freezing or drying them (dried plums are prunes).