

Pear Trees for Central Florida

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New pear tree varieties developed for warm climates have now made it possible for Central Florida homeowners to raise these fruit in their backyards. These trees make a nice addition to the home landscape, and their compact size, beautiful flowers, and tasty fruit increase interest year round.

Traditionally, pears have required long cold periods to induce flowering. New University of Florida varieties have been developed that need minimal cold periods for fruit production. “Chill hours” are the cumulative amount of time the temperature is below 45 degrees, and Central Florida averages between 150 and 310 chill hours per year. It is important to select trees with a minimal chilling requirement for your area. Weather will vary year to year, and a cooler winter may have more chill hours than a warmer winter. Selecting the varieties with low chill requirements will now make growing these delicious fruit

possible on a reliable basis.

The only three varieties that Central Florida homeowners should consider planting are ‘Flordahome’, ‘Hood’, and ‘Pineapple’.

These trees are self-pollinating but set fruit better when planted with another variety. The trees reach an overall height of 20’ feet tall with a spread 10’ foot wide. As seen in Figure 1, the trees have a very upright branching structure so they will benefit from pruning to make harvesting easier. Trees should flower in February to March with fruit ready for harvest in July to August. These trees are deciduous, so homeowners should expect the trees to drop their leaves in late fall.

Pears tend to be relatively pest and disease free but homeowners should monitor for leaf spot and fire blight. Fire blight will cause branches to turn brown very quickly and these should be pruned from the tree as soon as possible. Our humid weather makes leaf spot very common, but if the tree starts to drop leaves homeowners should consider treating with a copper fungicide to slow the progression.

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