

CHEERRIES

CHEERRIES In The Home Garden

Horticultural Branch, B.C. Ministry of
Agriculture

Sweet cherries usually bloom in late April. At this time of year the crop may be damaged by late spring frosts. The trees themselves are injured when winter temperatures fall below -10°F. Trunk bark splitting or sun scald injury to tree trunks is common if trees have a south-west exposure. Despite these hazards the cherry is a popular backyard tree. It produces the first fresh fruit of the season and makes a good shade tree.

VARIETIES. **Bing** - is a firm, large cherry. The fruit is highly susceptible to rain splitting. The tree is vigorous, upright and spreading. Maturity of fruit is 5-7 days earlier than Lambert. Requires a pollinator such as Van, Sam or Stella. **Lambert** - is a high quality variety for the fresh fruit market and for canning. It matures 5-7 days later than Bing. Lambert is one of the most widely grown of the commercial varieties.

Requires a pollinator such as Van, Sam or Stella. **Sam** - is a large, black cherry which is softer than Lambert. It matures about 7-10 days later than Bing and shows considerable resistance to rain splitting. Its primary use is canning. It is self-sterile but is a good pollinator for Bing and Lambert.

Van - reaches maturity about the same time as Bing. The fruit is distinguished from other varieties by its short stem and lustrous skin. The fruit is of high quality, firm, and fairly resistant to rain splitting. This variety is commonly used as a pollinator for Bing, Lambert and Sam.

Stella - is a variety which is

self-fertile. i.e. it will pollinate itself. The fruit is a good sized Lambert type black cherry. It matures about 4 - 5 days earlier than Bing. **Lapins** - is a newer Lambert type cherry which is both self-fertile and hardier than most other sweet cherries except Sam.

POLLINATION. The varieties Bing, Lambert, Van and Sam are self sterile and require cross-pollination. The Van variety is used most as a pollinator for the other varieties which will also pollinate Van. Stella and Lapins, on the other hand, are universal pollinators, which means they will pollinate all other varieties as well as themselves.



CARING
FOR
YOUR
CHERRY
TREE

PLANTING DISTANCES. Cherries should be planted about 20 feet apart and some distance from the house so that there is adequate air circulation and light.

PLANTING. One year nursery trees are preferred over older and larger trees because of ease of transplanting. Planting should be done in early spring before the buds begin to open.

TRAINING AND PRUNING. After planting the one year old whip or tree, it should be cut back to a height of 30 - 40 inches. This will promote lateral branching. The tree should be trained to the open centre system by selecting outward growing shoots with wide angle crotches. Retention of the central leader results in a tall narrow tree. Heading back of the terminal growth each year will promote new shoots and better spur development. Pruning is best done during the winter or early spring while the tree is in a dormant state.

FERTILIZING. Consult the fertilizer recommendations issued by the British Columbia Department of Agriculture for your area. Aim for about 12 - 15 inches of new growth annually. When using 34-0-0 a rule of thumb is that you apply 1 lb. of this fertilizer for every inch of trunk diameter.

OTHER ELEMENTS. Quite often zinc becomes a deficiency in cherry trees. Severe zinc deficiency is characterized by small, narrow chlorotic leaves which are usually distorted or wavy in shape. A spray of zinc sulfate plus hydrated lime right after harvest is the best remedy.

PEST AND DISEASE CONTROL. Among the most commonly found insect pests of cherries are black cherry aphid, fruit tree leaf roller, shot hole borer, cherry fruit worm, San Jose Scale, various mites, cherry slug and Cherry fruit fly. Diseases of cherries are Little Cherry Virus, Bacterial Canker, Sour Cherry Yellows and Brown Rot. Control measures for all of these pests and diseases are detailed in the publication "Pest Control for the Home Garden" issued by the British Columbia Department of Agriculture.

HARVESTING. Sweet cherries are harvested during late June or early July. Dark skinned varieties are at their best when they have attained a mahogany colour. Commercial maturity is ascertained by colour comparators which take into account the variation between varieties. Cherries are not adapted to long term storage

but may be held for a short time at a temperature around 32°F. to minimize wilting and loss from brown rot.

The order of maturity of the previously mentioned varieties is Sam, Stella, Bing, Van and Lambert.

For additional information, contact your nearest office of the British Columbia Department of Agriculture.

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