



# Apple & Pear Trees

GROWING GUIDE

POMONA FRUITS

Garden Fruit Specialists

# Planting

Apples and pears need a sunny site and a neutral soil to crop well, a pH of 6.5 - 7.5 is ideal.

Plant your trees as soon as possible after receipt, allowing sufficient space for them to grow. Bush trees will grow 2.5-3.5m (8-12ft) in height and spread. Cordons should be restricted to 1.8-2.4m (6-8ft) in height and can be spaced 60-90cm (2-3ft) apart.

Should weather conditions be adverse (i.e. if the ground is frozen or too wet to plant), then the trees should be temporarily heeled in until conditions improve. Dig a hole or shallow trench, lay the trees at an oblique angle and cover the roots loosely with sufficient soil or compost so that no roots are exposed to the air.

Improve the soil structure by thorough digging before planting, ideally to a depth of about 45cm (18in) - two spades deep. Mix in plenty of well-rotted manure or compost.

Soak the root system in water for 1-2 hours. Dig a hole comfortably large enough to take the root system (so the roots can be evenly spread out), ensuring the top of the root system is level with the surrounding soil or up to 2.5cm (1in) deeper. Apply [rootgrow™ mycorrhizal fungi](#) directly to the roots before planting - this will help the tree to establish quickly. Tread firmly and water-in thoroughly. Stake the tree and secure with tree ties to prevent rocking whilst the roots establish.

# Maintenance

## Watering

Keep the soil around the tree moist throughout the first growing season. In later years only water during prolonged dry spells, drenching thoroughly no more than once a week.

## Weeding & Mulching

Keep the area around the trees free of weeds, particularly during the first year. An annual mulch of well rotted compost will greatly improve moisture retention and soil structure, and help suppress unwanted weeds.

# Growing in a Pot

Cordon apples and pears can be grown in pots. Initially pot your tree up into a container that is approximately 30-40cm (12-15in) in diameter using a good quality free draining loam based compost such as John Innes No. 3. The pH. should be relatively high (between 6 and 7.5).

**WATERING** – Your tree will need daily watering during the growing season, in extremely hot dry weather maybe even twice a day. Aim to keep the compost moist at all times, but do NOT leave it standing in water or you risk drowning the roots. Make sure there is an escape route for the water by way of holes in the base of your pot to avoid instances of drowning.

# Pruning

## For a Bush Tree

Prune back the leading shoot at planting time to the height at which you want the head to form. Over the next two winters cut back all shoots to form a balanced 'bush' framework. In later years prune in July: remove any crossing or tangled branches, keeping the centre of your tree open to sun and air.

## For a Cordon

Trim back all side shoots to 10cm (4in) spurs and the leader by half. In later years in late July trim back all new side growths to 10cm (4in) spurs and shorten the leader by a third. Then in winter just remove any late growth made from these spurs after the summer pruning.

# Pruning

## For a Stepmover

Stepmovers are supplied in a 'Y' shape with two main shoots that can be trained out in opposite directions at about 45cm (18in) above the ground. Before planting, set up a wire on short posts about 3 or 4 inches above the 'Y' joint, allowing a minimum of 1.8m (6ft) total spread per tree. Plant the tree in position and carefully bend the arms down as far as they will go without putting too much stress on the 'Y' joint.\*\*\* Too much force or stress to the 'Y' joint will cause it to split or fracture. Tie in this position for 3-4 weeks and then try to bend both arms down further. It may take several attempts before the arms are in a horizontal position. In June, to extend the width, select a strong vertical shoot near the end of each arm and tie it to a bamboo cane at an outward angle of 45°. At the end of July, train the selected shoots down horizontally and prune all other new shoots back to 10cm (4in) spurs.

\*\*\*Tip: If you twist both arms slightly in opposite directions before bending them down (i.e. one arm towards you, one arm away from you), you will reduce the stress to the 'Y' joint and this will allow the arms to bend down further.

# Pruning

## For an Espalier

The aim is to train the side branches in pairs out to left and right in a series of horizontal tiers approximately 45cm (18in) apart. It is usually easier to set up horizontal wires or bamboo canes at the correct 45cm (18in) spacing on the wall or fence before planting the tree, together with a vertical bamboo cane to keep the main stem straight. The structural pruning to form the tiered espalier shape is done in winter, each arm is then summer-pruned as a cordon.

Structural pruning (for an espalier):

1. At time of planting if there are two suitable side-shoots at around 45-50cm above soil level these can form the first tier, carefully tie them out to the first wire or cane, one to each side. Do this carefully to avoid breaking them. If they seem particularly stiff don't bend them right down to the horizontal in one go, this can be done in a series of steps over a month or two if necessary. If there are no suitable side-shoots, cut the main stem back to a bud 50-60cm above soil level then continue from (2) below. Tie the main stem (leader) of the tree to the vertical cane. Trim back any other side shoots to spurs about 10cm (4in) long.

# Pruning

## Espalier continued

2. To create the second (and subsequent) tiers. If the leader already stretches more than 50cm above the first tier, prune it to a bud at about 50cm (20in) above the first tier. You now need 3 shoots to grow from just below this cut: the central one will be the new leader, the other two will form the next tier of your espalier. During their first summer start to train them outwards at an angle of approximately 45° away from the vertical. This will prepare them to be tied down to the horizontal wires the next winter. If the main shoot reaches less than 50cm above the previous tier allow it to grow on for a year then cut it back the following winter to a bud 50cm above the previous tier. In this way an extra tier will be added every year or two, depending how vigorously your tree is growing.

Maintenance pruning (for an espalier): Each summer trim back all new side-shoots that have grown from the arms and the main stem to 10cm (4in) fruiting spurs. Leave untouched the 3 shoots growing at the top of the tree to form the next tier and the outermost new shoot on each arm which is extending the spread of the espalier. These new shoots will be growing outwards and upwards, wait till winter to tie them down to the horizontal wires or canes, at which time trim them back to about 30cm (12in) long extensions.

For more information on pruning apples and pears refer to [RHS Pruning & Training](#).



# Management

## Feeding

Most garden soils contain sufficient nutrients for a tree to grow healthily, though a high potash top-dressing (such as Fruit Feed) during the spring can be beneficial. Avoid high nitrogen fertilizers (such as chicken manure) which stimulate shoot growth rather than flower bud and fruit formation.

IF GROWING IN A POT – Your tree will need regular feeding during spring and early summer with a high potash (low nitrogen) feed. For application rates follow the instructions on the packaging. To keep the tree growing healthily it will also need fresh compost to root into each year. In the early years this is best done by potting the tree on into progressively larger pots. Once the final pot size has been reached (we would recommend a pot that is 45-50cm [18-20in] in diameter), remove the tree from the pot in late winter each year, cut or chop away about a third of the rootball from the bottom, part fill the pot with fresh compost and re-pot.

## Pests & Diseases

In a garden setting, a regular spray program may not be necessary but watch out for signs of pests and diseases. Any chemicals should be used strictly as per the manufacturers instructions.

# Thank You!

## Questions & Answers

We have lots of detailed blog pieces on site that you might find useful here:

<http://www.pomonafruits.co.uk/blog/>

Any questions you have can be quickly answered by our team of dedicated staff so do not hesitate to get in touch!

## Our Address:

Pomona Fruits Ltd, Pomona House, 12 Third Avenue, Walton-on-Naze, Essex CO14 8JU

Please note we are not open to the public

## Our Telephone Number:

01255 440410

## Our Email Address:

info@pomonafruits.co.uk



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