

Dwarf Fruit Trees

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Many people love fresh fruit, but it isn't easy to grow with today's smaller yards. However, many dwarf fruit trees are available that fit well in today's compact landscapes. Be aware that you will likely need to order these online or through the mail.

Before getting into specific varieties, dwarf fruit trees come in two broad categories—genetic dwarfs and fruit trees that are not typically dwarf but are grafted onto dwarfing rootstocks. Those grafted onto dwarfing rootstock are far more available, but most will need to be supported for the tree's life with a strong stake or trellising wire. Genetic dwarf fruit trees are generally sturdier and may not require staking.

The most popular fruit tree to grow in Utah is the peach, with more genetic dwarf options available than for other species. In early spring, some can be found at local retailers. Dwarf peaches can be quite ornamental, looking like miniature palm trees as they mature. The most common variety is 'Bonanza', but 'Pix Zee' is becoming popular. 'Bonfire' features dark red leaves and darker pink blossoms. Some dwarf nectarines, which are fuzz-less peaches, include 'Nectar Babe' and 'Garden Delight'. A few columnar peaches can be found as well, such as 'SunHigh', which stays narrower but can grow to 15 feet tall if left unpruned and may reach 10 to 12 feet wide.

Apples are also very popular in the state, with only one genetic dwarf I found called 'Apple Babe'. As mentioned earlier, numerous apple varieties are grafted onto dwarfing rootstock. Thus, if you want a dwarf 'Gala' or dwarf 'Golden Delicious', among other common varieties, they are available. Several columnar apple varieties can grow to 12 to 15 feet tall and 3 to 4 feet wide, which can be maintained at a shorter and narrower size. The ones I located include: 'Blushing Delight', 'Tasty Red', 'Tangy Green', 'Scarlet Sentinel', 'Golden Sentinel', 'North Pole', 'Golden Treat', 'Stark Emerald Spire', and 'Stark Scarlet Spire'. I am excited about these columnar apples because they could easily be used as an edible hedge row.

Plums were more common in the past, but many still enjoy them. Look for 'Nadia' cherry plum, 'Mirabelle', 'Gras Romanese', and 'Hollywood'. An online retailer called Raintree Nursery seems to have many dwarf plums available.

There are fewer dwarf cherries to choose from. The available ones are usually grafted onto Gisela 5 rootstock, which keeps the trees under 10 feet tall. After 2 to 3 years, cherries grafted onto this rootstock do not require staking. Some dwarf tart cherries (pie cherries) available were bred in Canada, including 'Romeo', 'Juliet', and 'Wowza'. 'Wowza' appears to

be the most promising, as it is more productive than the other two. Another option is 'Northstar', which can be found online. Another cherry to consider is the Nanking bush cherry, which was once commonly used as a screen and hedge. It is very cold-hardy, tolerates Utah soils, and its fruit can be used for jams, syrups, and other applications for tart cherries.