

Ask an Expert – Dwarf Fruit Trees Bring Fruit to Small Spaces

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Many people love fresh fruit, but it isn't easy to grow in today's smaller yards. Luckily, many dwarf fruit trees are available that fit well in compact landscapes, but they will likely need to be ordered online.

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 with a strong stake or trellising wire for the duration of the tree's life. Genetic dwarf fruit trees are generally sturdier and may not require staking. Consider these dwarf fruit tree options.

Peach Trees – The peach tree is the most popular fruit tree grown in Utah, with more genetic dwarf options available than other species. Some can be found at local retailers in the spring. Dwarf peaches can be quite ornamental and look 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, such as "SunHigh," which stays narrower, but can grow to 15 feet tall if left unpruned and may reach 10 to 12 feet wide.

Apple Trees – Apple trees are also popular in Utah, with only one genetic dwarf found, the "Apple Babe." 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 12 to 15 feet tall and 3 to 4 feet wide, which can be maintained at a shorter and narrower size. Some varieties include: "Blushing Delight," "Tasty Red," "Tangy Green," "Scarlet Sentinel," "Golden Sentinel," "North Pole," "Golden Treat," "Stark Emerald Spire," and "Stark Scarlet Spire." These columnar apples could easily be used as an edible hedge row.

Plum Trees – Plum trees were more common in the past, but many people still enjoy them. Look for "Nadia" cherry plum, "Mirabelle," "Gras Romanese," and "Hollywood." Raintree Nursery, an online retailer, has a variety of dwarf plum trees available.

Cherry Trees – There are fewer dwarf cherry tree varieties. Those available 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 of the available dwarf tart cherries (pie cherries) were bred in Canada, including "Romeo," "Juliet," and "Wowza," which appears to be the most promising, as it is more productive than the other two. Other options include "Northstar," which can be found online, and 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 foods.

Contact

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