

Fruit Trees On Allotments
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Re changes to the rules regarding fruit trees discussed last month. The spacings from paths and borders are agreeable but I suggest the rules regarding numbers of trees need some amendment.

The following are my considered recommendations for Rules regarding Fruit trees.

Maximum Tree Heights

Maximum allowed tree height 9 ft- 3 metres, for Standard, Bush, Pyramid, Fan or Espalier format.
Maximum Cordon tree height- 6.5 ft, 2 metres

These heights apply to all fruit trees in the prescribed forms defined.
Yearly pruning of all trees must be done by tenants to remain within the defined heights.
The above tree quantities may be increased, with the Ground Committee's agreement.

If the annual tree pruning is not carried out, and trees become too large and unmanageable, the ground committee may instruct the plot holder to carry out the pruning and or reduce the number of trees or both actions. Failure to do so could mean loss of tenancy.

Maximum Number of trees permitted.

Cordons

50 trees for a half sized plot.
100 trees for a full sized plot

Trees, Bushes, Pyramids, Fans or Espaliers

6 for a half sized plot
12 for a full sized plot

Stepovers trees

Numbers are limited by the border lengths available to plant them into, they being normally used as a border edging tree and only 2-3 ft high, 0.8-1 metres high.

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Also - some explanation or guidance needs to be given to allotment committee's, who generally, lack the background information on fruit trees to arrive at informed decisions for plot holders. To this end I offer some guidance and suggestions to the Rules Sub-committee drafting the amended rules for the next stage of discussion. There are many variable conditions that affect a trees growth so expect surprises to what size you think the trees will ultimately grow like.

I suggest the text below could be printed as an addendum to the Rules.

“Fruit Tree Guidance Notes- for Ground Committee's and Members”.

Very few varieties of fruit trees, Apples, Pears, Plums, Cherries, Apricots, Peaches, Nectarines or Quince etc can be propagated by hardwood cuttings, so propagation of varieties is done by budding or grafting onto compatible and **dwarfing rootstock's**. The few tree varieties that can be grown from cuttings plus tree seedlings can ultimately grow to 7 metres or more. Its in their nature to do so and they're too large for allotment grounds..

For Allotment use, trees should **always be grafted or budded onto dwarfing root stocks**. Please note ultimate tree heights defined below are typical only and are subject to adjustment, because tree growth depends on location and growing conditions.

For best results, tree rows, where possible, are usually planted in a north to south direction to reduce shading cast by adjacent rows of trees.

Tree Rootstock's.

The root stocks defined below are the normal ones used by nurseries. There are hundreds of other types available internationally, so don't be surprised if someone introduces trees on other rootstock's. If investigation is needed, details can be found on the internet and in specialist books if you need to establish growing habits.

Apple Rootstock's ultimate heights- subject to growing conditions

MM106- Semi Dwarfing- ultimate height 7 metres

M9- Dwarfing- ultimate height 4 metres

M27- Very Dwarfing- ultimate height 3 metres

M25- Oversized- 10 metres and upwards

Pear Root stocks ultimate heights-subject to growing conditions

Seedling Pear – 26ft, 8 metres

Quince “A”- semi dwarfing 15ft, 5 metres

Quince “C” Semi dwarfing-13ft, 4 metres

Plum Rootstock's ultimate heights- subject to growing conditions

Pixy- Dwarfing 9-12 ft. 3-4 metres

St. Julian “A”- semi dwarfing15-17ft,5-6 metres.

Wild Plum- non dwarfing- 22-33ft. 7- 10 metres

Cherry Rootstock's ultimate heights- subject to growing conditions

Colt- semi dwarfing 15-22ft, 5-7 metres

Gisela 5 - Dwarfing 10-15ft, 3-5 metres

Wild Cherry-Non dwarfing- trees can ultimately reach 10 metres tall.

Yearly pruning will reduce the above ultimate tree heights significantly.

Growing Methods/ Tree Shapes

Tree shaping methods are simply adaptations of trees to suit the growers needs, of location, soil, productiveness and harvesting methods. Typically these are- **Standard Tree, Bush, Pyramid, Espalier, Fan, Oblique or Vertical Cordon, Step-overs**. There are many other methods. The root stocks defined above are those most commonly used by UK nurseries.

Apples- Standard Trees, Bush, Pyramid, Fans, Espaliers, Oblique Cordons or Step-overs
MM106 Apples grown on this root stock are well suited to all above forms and will grow well but will need pruning yearly. Support stakes are needed for the 1st year only. *(Some extremely vigorous varieties, Bramley, Belle de Boskoop etc. will still grow to 7 metres on MM106 root stock so are best grown on M9 root stock instead.)*

M9 – Can be used for all of the above shapes and will produce a smaller tree. Yearly pruning is still needed. A Permanent stake is needed to support the tree. See note regarding vigorous growing varieties above.

M27 lacks the vigour to grow well. It has weak roots so is ideal for use as small cordons, step-overs or Pot grown trees. Yearly late Summer pruning is mostly done to improve flower and fruit production. A permanent support is needed.

Pears- Standard Trees, Bush, Pyramid, Fans, Espaliers, Oblique/Vertical Cordons or Step-overs will generally do well on Quince “C”
Quince “A”
Quince “C”
Seedling Pear

Plums- Standard Tree, Bush, Pyramid, Fans, Espaliers will generally do well. They are rarely grown as Cordons or Step-overs because of their vigorous growth habits.

St. Julian “A”- (This is the most commonly used root stock for plums). Pruning is needed every year to maintain tree heights. Pruning is done in late May/June.

Pixy- Dwarfing-. Pixy is good at bringing tree into fruiting earlier than trees grafted onto St.Julian root stock. Pruning is done in late May/June.

Cherries- Standard Trees, Bush, Fans, Pyramid, Espaliers, will generally do well. They are rarely grown as Cordons or Step-overs because of their vigorous growth habits.

Colt- Cherries are mostly grown on this root stock. All above forms can be grown on this root stock. Pruning is needed every year to maintain tree heights. It is still vigorous & will still grow into a big tree. Pruning is done in late May/June.

Gisela 5- Less commonly available but giving a smaller more manageable tree. Cherries grown on this root stock will still need pruning every year. Pruning is done in late May/June.

PRUNING to Control Tree Size.

Apples & Pears - Summer Pruning, done late August, (*for Manchester Area*) yearly, is most effective in keeping trees down to a manageable size with the minimum of effort. It causes some stress to the trees and they respond by initiating the production of flower buds the following season.

Apples & Pears-Winter pruning Done December to February, encourages regrowth and is used most often when shaping trees. **Hard winter pruning** produces lots of spring regrowth, whereas **Light Winter pruning of the extremities**, known as tipping of the top third of branches or twigs, produces much less regrowth and can be effective to make the tree produce fruiting spurs. This is best method for older trees.

Fruiting will always slow tree growth, the trees energy going into producing fruit instead of growth so getting the tree into fruiting habit is a good idea and will reduce the amount of pruning.

Plums and Cherries. All stoned fruit should be pruned when in full growth to reduce the possibility of them catching the Silver Leaf fungal disease which is a killer for them. The Time for Pruning is between May to July when any pruning scars will heal quickly. Its recommended that the ends of cut branch diameters of larger than 2cm should have their ends sealed with pruning wax. Pruning will induce fruiting spurs.

Trees- Maximum Numbers of trees and Spacing.

Standard Trees or Bush Trees - 10 feet, 3 metres tall.

At 10 ft- 3 meters tall. - The trees will have a root ball area of about 20 ft, 6 meters diameter. E.g. Root Ball Diameter is approximately equal to twice their height . Trees could be planted with a spacing of 3 metres between them and 4 metres between rows. Trees are arranged into a diamond pattern make the best use of space.

The Maximum number of **Bush** or **Standard** trees that could be planted would depend on the plot size and height of trees using these spacings as a guide.

Cordon Trees

Cordon trees, Vertical or Oblique, are usually grown to a height that permits easy management of the tree/s. 6- 8 ft. (2-2.5 metres) tall. Spacing between trees can be reduced to 2ft (600mm) and pruned accordingly each year to produce a slim tree that will fill the space available. Because the trees are hard pruned in summer, their growth is very restricted their root ball is much reduced and parallel rows can be planted 5-6ft (1.5-1.8 metres) apart.

It is recommended that the maximum number of Cordon trees of 2 metres high, are limited to 100 for a full size plot and 50 for a half size plot.. Use a row spacing of 5-6ft and spacing between trees in a row of 2 ft minimum with a 2 ft clearance to path edge each side.

Espaliers and Step Over Trees.

These forms of trees, are trained as a wide but flat horizontal spread of branches.

The **Step over** has a single layer and is often used as a border to edge a planted area such as a flower or veg patch. Height is usually 2-3 ft (0.6-1.0 metres)

The **Espalier** form can have many layers of horizontal branches spreading out up to 9ft (3 metres) either side of the centre trunk. Maximum height is usually what the grower decides is manageable. 6-8 ft. (2-3 metres is normal). MM106 is the best root-stock for these. M9 & M27 can both be used, producing smaller more easily managed trees.

Vigorous tree varieties don't make good espaliers or Step over trees. Their excessive growth makes the annual pruning a long task. If vigorous varieties must be grown, graft them onto M9 stock to reduce their size and growth.

Spacings and numbers of trees depend on the eventual sizes the grower wants them to reach and the space available. It is suggested the number of trees of Espalier or Step overs be limited to available space if that is what the plot holder desires, so long as the plot holder has the capacity to keep them all adequately pruned.