

Common Questions Concerning Young Mango Trees

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Growing mango trees can be very rewarding, and is accomplished fairly easily in South Florida. Mango trees are able to produce fruit with relatively low input from the grower. There are over 1,000 different cultivars of mangos, so be sure to plant and grow a cultivar that you like. The following are common questions asked about growing mango trees in South Florida.

How soon will my tree produce fruit after planting?

Mango trees are almost always propagated by grafting, a type of asexual propagation. Tree's that are grafted are a clone of the parent tree, so they keep all of the characteristics of the mother plant. They also skip the stages of growth and maturity that a tree planted from seed would have to go through and are therefore ready to fruit and flower immediately. Most trees are planted at the 3-gallon size, so they simply need to grow large enough to be able to support fruit production. It typically takes two to three years before a tree is ready to produce fruit, although some trees can produce sooner.



A young mango tree planted in full sun with a barrier of mulch.

Where should I plant my mango tree?

Mango trees, like most fruit trees, need to be planted in the full sun. The area chosen should be large enough to allow the mango to grow to at least twelve feet by twelve feet, and still receive a large amount of sunlight. The planting area should not hold

water after a heavy rain. Mangos should not be planted in the middle of lawns if the lawn is going to be irrigated and fertilized, as excessive irrigation and nitrogen have negative impacts on mango fruit production. In addition, trees should be planted away from the home, other structures, and power-lines.

How should I plant my mango tree?

Mango trees should be planted as soon as possible after the trees are purchased, and should be planted in our native soil. Augmenting the soil with additives is not recommended. The hole for the mango tree should be dug just larger than the root ball using a pick-axe and/or digging bar to break up the limestone rock. The most important factor is planting at the correct depth. The first lateral root, also called a flare root, will guide you as to what level the tree should be planted. The flare root should be at or slightly above ground level. Break up the root system before the tree goes into the ground and make sure that the tree is not root bound (has circling roots). Trees that are not kept in containers for an excessive amount of time normally have healthy roots.



A mango tree that was rootbound. The circling roots eventually led to the tree's death.

What type of aftercare should I give my mango tree once it is planted?

Young trees need to be protected, so be sure to place a mulch barrier around the tree. One bag of mulch, or more, should circle the young tree with the center of the mulch pulled away from the tree's trunk. The tree's trunk should not come into contact with the mulch. The mulch barrier will protect the young tree from string trimmer and other types of mechanical damage. Make sure that the tree is also watered on a fairly regular schedule when the tree is newly planted. Always water at planting, and then water every two to three days after that until the summer rains begin, or until the tree has put out two new flushes of growth. Too much water is detrimental as the tree's roots will rot. Make sure that the tree was staked, or if it has a label, that the tree tape or label is not too tight on the plant causing it to be girdled.



A young mango tree that was tipped causing it to have six new branches.

When do I begin pruning my mango tree?

It is ideal to prune your mango tree to control the height so that harvesting and general care is easier to accomplish. Mangos are potentially very large trees and can get out of hand if left unpruned. Mango tipping is used to cause the tree's shoots to produce multiple buds and branches. The first heading cut should be made around three feet off of the ground. The three to four branches that are produced after the first heading cut should be allowed to grow about ten to twelve inches and then cut again once they have hardened off (the leaves are no longer light green and soft). Multiple tipping is done on the tree for the first year until a tree with multiple branches and flowering points is formed.

Can I grow a tree in a container?

If you have the ability to grow your mango tree in the ground, do so. Trees are much easier to maintain in the ground as timely watering is not nearly as crucial. Trees grown in containers can quickly dry out and begin to deteriorate due to lack of water. For some growers, a container is the only option. If this is the case, cultivars that perform better in containers are 'Mallika' and 'Cogshall'. A container grown mango should be stepped-up into a larger pot as the tree's roots begin to fill the container. Eventually, a very large container will be used, but do not start out in a large container as there will not be enough root mass to absorb the water in the large amount of soil, and the tree's roots will rot.

How should I fertilize my young mango?

Most young mango trees have some slow release fertilizer already in the soil mix from the nursery. This fertilizer will last up to eight months, so no fertilizer is needed initially. After the first growing season, a tree may need foliar applications of minor elements or a root drench of chelated iron. Mango trees are very sensitive to nitrogen, and very low levels of nitrogen should be used. The typical fruit blend of 8-3-9 (N-P-K) contains too much nitrogen for mangos and should be avoided. If one wished to feed your tree using a granular mix, the last number of the mix, the potassium, should be the largest.

What are some good cultivars to grow in my yard?

There are a number of good, fiberless, moderately disease resistant mango cultivars that do not get to be large trees when selectively pruned. Good cultivars include: 'Fairchild', 'Cogshall', 'Rosigold', 'Mallika', 'Angie', 'Nam Doc Mai', 'Glenn', 'Carrie', and 'Graham'.

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