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## KIWI

**SOIL REQUIREMENTS:** Kiwis can be grown in a wide variety of soils as long as they are well drained. A pH of 6 to 6.5 is best.

**CULTURAL REQUIREMENT:** Kiwi vines take some care in pruning and support but are otherwise easy to grow. There are no significant pests or diseases plaguing vines grown in the PNW. They need well drained soil, but because they are shallow rooted, summer irrigation may be necessary during dry periods. The plants leaf out early and late frosts can cause much loss of leaves, which in established plants, are rapidly replaced and are unlikely to cause problems. Fuzzy kiwis ripen successfully in warmer parts of the NW, as far as Vancouver Island in British Columbia. They do best in a warm protected location. While experience is more limited, Hardy Kiwis should ripen in almost all areas of the US where temperatures do not fall below -25 degrees F. All kiwis should be protected from strong winds to avoid damage to the long canes.

Kiwis are vigorous vines. They cannot support their own weight and will spread up to 30 feet. The rampant growth and abundant fruit crop requires strong support such as a trellis, arbor or fence. Training to the south side of a building is excellent for the small planting. Kiwi vines are heavy feeders. About 1 to 1 ½ lbs. of nitrogen can be given to mature vines annually for vigorous growth while young vines should receive half this amount. To avoid frost damage to tender wood, fertilization should be done in winter and spring. A mature kiwi can produce 200 lbs. of fruit.

**NOTE:** To set blossoms on older plants, alternate a period of watering and drying. Thoroughly soak 2 days in a row, then let drain for 4-5 days to induce setting buds.

**PRUNING:** Vines must be supported on some type of structure. A 6" high T-bar trellis with 3-5 horizontal wires is the most common type of support. Pergolas, arbors and other types of trellises can also be used.

All fruit are produced on new growth that emerges from one year old wood. Large, bulbous fruit buds are easy to distinguish from flat buds for foliage. The purpose of pruning is to maximize new fruiting wood and to balance vegetative growth with fruit production. Prune only when the vines are fully dormant. Pruning after buds have begun to swell causes excessive sap flow, which weakens the vine.

The fruiting lateral method of pruning is the easiest for kiwi fruit. This is done by training to cordons, permanent branches, straight up to the middle wire before it is allowed to branch. When the vine is several inches above the wire, it is then allowed to branch. At this time, you want to pinch it back to 2-3 inches below the wire. When the branches begin to grow, select two strong ones and cut off the rest. Cut these canes back to 24-36 inches in the dormant season. If the vine does not reach the wire the first year, cut it back to 4-8 buds above the ground and retain a single, strong vine for the next year.

The second season, select fruiting laterals spaced 24-26 inches apart along the main cordons. Allow cordons to continue to increase in length but cut fruiting laterals just beyond the outside wire. Laterals will fruit for 2-3 years depending on their vigor.

In the second summer of fruit lateral growth, canes emerging from the lateral will produce fruit at their bases. During the growing season, usually May or June, cut these canes back to 6-10 buds beyond the last blossoms. This will help avoid excess twining and channel energy to the fruit.

Remove most new laterals arising from the cordon, especially those with strong upright growth. Leave enough laterals to replace old, fruiting canes that will need to be removed as their production declines.

During the second winter of a lateral's growth, cut it back, leaving only two or three canes that fruited the previous season. As they fruit the following summer, cut them back to 6-10 buds past the last blossom. In its third dormant season, remove the fruiting lateral. Thus, pruning mature vines consists of renewing one third of the fruiting wood each year. Also remove twining and crisscrossing canes during dormant season pruning.

The spur method of pruning kiwi takes a good deal more work than the fruiting lateral method. It is often recommended to espalier, choose shorter fruiting canes spaced 12-15 inches apart. The first season cut them back to 2-3 buds. These spurs should grow slowly so don't pinch them the second or third fruiting seasons. After fruiting twice, remove them and replace with selected new spurs.

Methods of training over arbors or pergolas are similar to training on trellises. Vines are headed the first or second seasons, depending on the height of the supports. You will also want to develop secondary cordons off the primary ones.

Fruiting laterals is the easiest method of pruning kiwi. Laterals produce fruit for 3 years and are then removed.