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## APPLE TREE PLANTING, CARE & PRUNING

### Planting distances

Minimum space between plants;

Tree 15ft / 4.5m

Dwarf Tree 5ft / 1.5m

Cordon M9 3ft / 1m

Espalier 6ft / 1.8 m

### Planting Apple Trees

Apple trees will grow in most soils that are moist but free draining avoiding salt-laden air and shallow alkaline soils. Full sun is preferred but some shade will be tolerated. For Northern positions choose a hardier variety. Follow our videos or written guides planting bare root trees or planting containerised trees in our Help & Advice section.

### Initial pruning of a 1 year old maiden tree

Trees - Cut the main stem back to around 48 inches between November-March and remove any lower branches. This will encourage lower growing laterals and a clear stem of 36 inches.

Dwarf Trees - Cut the main stem back to around 24 inches between November-March. This will encourage lower growing laterals and a clear stem of 12-18 inches.

Cordon M9 - Cut back the main stem to around 24 inches between November-March. This will encourage laterals to grow which will form the shape of the cordon.

Espaliers - Cut back the main stem to around 18 inches between November-March. This will encourage laterals to grow which will form the shape of the espalier.

### Support

Trees - A stake and tie should be used for all trees. Larger trees 4 year old + will require a staking kit. For staking instructions see our videos and written guides Staking a larger tree, planting bare root trees and planting containerised trees in our help and advice section.

Cordon M9 - Cordon trained trees will require a wire support system to be trained along. Using vine eyes and galvanised wire create a set of tiers approximately 18 inches apart.

Espaliers - Espalier trained trees will require a wire support system to be trained along. Using vine eyes and galvanised wire create a set of tiers. The first tier should be 18 inches above ground level and each subsequent tier 15 inches apart.

## Feeding & Mulching

Apply a general fertiliser such as Growmore in late spring. Apply also a 3 inch mulch of well-rotted manure or compost to keep the weeds at bay. When applying mulch avoid making contact with the bark of the tree. Bark chip can also be used for this purpose.

## Picking & Storage

Apples will come away easily from the tree with a slight twist if ripe. Many will develop better flavours if left on the tree. How long an apple will store for is dependent on the variety. Using trays to store the fruit is a traditional method but wrapping in paper and placing them into a plastic bag with several small, perforated holes is effective. Fold the top of the bag over gently without excluding all of the air and rest the bag folded side down in a cool dark place. Whichever method of storage is used, the apples should be checked regularly for rotted fruits which should be removed immediately.

## Seasonal Care

Mulch in spring and feed as detailed in Feeding & Mulching above. During any summer long, hot, dry spells water occasionally, especially as the fruit begins to appear. Most trees will establish quickly and not require additional water. Over watering is often more of a problem than under watering, to get the balance right scrape away any mulch and dig down with a finger a few centimetres. If the soil is even slightly moist then no water is required. If the soil is very dry then water and repeat the moisture test as necessary. Most trees planted as bare roots won't require watering. Trees planted from containers may require additional water throughout the first year. Keep grass away from the trunk, in the first 3 or 4 years it is advisable to keep the grass at least 2 foot away from the base of the tree. Mulching can help to achieve this.

## Pruning Apple Trees

Tree (including dwarf) - The goal is to have 7 or 8 strong branches, primary and secondary, which are well spaced by about 4 years old. Prune in March. On a 2 year old tree cut back strong branches to half their length and cut back weaker branches to a third of their length. On a 3 year old tree cut out any new growth which crowds the centre of the tree. Cut back new growth to about half its length. When pruning an established tree remove any dead or diseased wood and crossing branches that crowd the centre. Inside the head of the tree cut back any over vigorous laterals, leaving the leaders alone. Around the outside of the head prune little if at all. All established pruning should take place from November - March..

Cordon- Once the formal pruning has been done new shoots will grow along the stem. Tie in the central leader to a cane or wire and prune back the lower side laterals to 3 or 4 buds. To encourage further laterals in early spring cut back the new growth of the leader by about half. Continue the process until the desired height has been reached and then prune out the leader. Cut back the laterals each year in August leaving 3 buds on new wood to encourage fruiting buds to form

Espalier - Once the formal pruning has been done a bush of new shoots will grow. Take the first shoot below the pruning cut and tie it straight up to a cane. Next take one lower shoot to the left and one to the right to form the first tier. Tie them gently with tubing or soft garden twine to your wire, which should be in situ. The following winter cut the single upright shoot to just below where your second tier will sit. Repeat the process until enough tiers are produced. Continue to train the horizontal arms out on wires until the desired width is achieved then prune in the spring to stop the espalier. The leader should also be removed once the desired height is achieved. An established espalier will produce vertical shoots from the horizontal tiers. In August cut these vertical shoots back leaving 3 buds per upright, this will produce your fruiting spurs.