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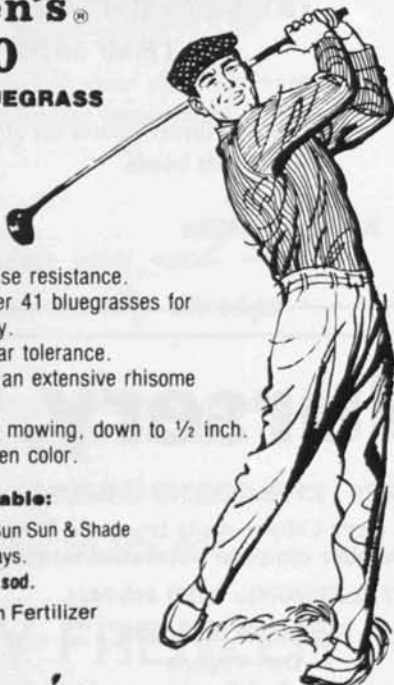
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Some Reasons Fruit Trees May Not Bear

by James A. Fizzell, Sr. Ext. Adviser
Horticulture

As we move into a new season we are already anticipating the harvest of next fall. This is particularly true for those of us who grow fruit trees.

Now is the time to think about reasons trees may not bear, and to plan so your trees have every chance to bear.

Fruit trees will bear a crop when the plants are healthy enough to produce a reserve of stored carbohydrates, in addition to what is needed for growth.

Young vigorous trees may use up their foodstuffs just producing leaves. Plants damaged by insects or diseases may use vital carbohydrates making new leaves.

Unless over stimulated with nitrogen fertilizer, new trees should start bearing a couple of years after planting. Dwarfs begin 2-3 years before standard sized trees. Apples should begin in 3-5 years; sour cherry, 4-6 years; peach, 2-4 years; pear, 3-6 years; and plums in 3-5 years.

Weather conditions can affect trees even though bearing has begun. Extremely cold weather in winter, or spring frost, may kill fruit buds. Peaches are the most sensitive to cold; the buds may be killed by temperatures at 10° below zero. As the fruit buds open, heavy frost will kill many fruit buds. If the buds have started to open but not blossomed yet, the buds can tolerate temperatures of 25° or above. Once open, blossoms of most fruit trees will die if temperatures drop below 28°.

An abundance of blossoms does not necessarily mean there will be a lot of fruit. The flowers still have to be pollinated.

Some tree-fruit varieties are self-fruitful. Such varieties set fruit when pollinated by their own flowers, or by pollen from another tree of the same variety. Most peach and sour cherry varieties are self-pollinating.

Non-self-fruiting varieties need pollination from a tree of a different variety. Even then, some varieties will not cross pollenate.

Apples recommended for Northern Illinois include Red and Golden Delicious, Jonathan, McIntosh, Empire and new scab resistant varieties Prima and Priscilla. Plant any two to insure pollination.

Seckel and Moonglow and Starking Delicious pears cross pollenate.

Protecting the fruit from insects and diseases in Northern Illinois means setting up a season-long spray schedule. You can write to the University of Illinois, 4200 West Euclid Avenue, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008 and request a home garden fruit spray schedule. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope and ask for the 1984 Tree Fruit Spray schedule.

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