



**Marianne Lipanovich**

I'm a California-based writer and editor. While most of my projects are garden-based, you might also find me writing about home projects and classical music. Away from the computer, I'm found in the garden (naturally), on my bike, or ice-skating outdoors (yes, that is possible in California). I'm also willing to taste-test anything that's chocolate.

## Crazy for Fruit Trees

**Whether a single citrus or a mini apple orchard, even the smallest landscape space can bear deliriously delicious fruit**

Fruit trees are the perfect landscape choice in many ways: gorgeous blossoms, foliage for shade on a summer day, tasty fruit and usually great fall color. Even in winter, the bare branches of most fruit trees provide interest in the landscape.

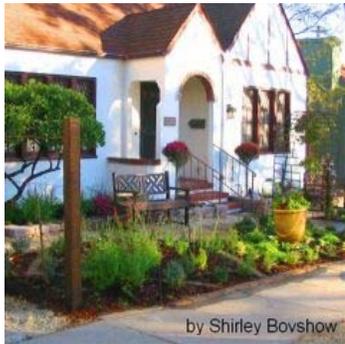
That being said, there are some things to think about before planting. For one thing, many fruit trees require more care than other trees. You'll need to deal with the harvest, which from a full-size mature tree can be overwhelming, not to mention difficult to reach. Do you really want to climb to the top of a 50-foot tree? (I've always left that fruit for the birds.) You'll probably also have to deal with preventing pests and diseases, and you may need to thin overly productive trees and prop up heavy branches. Plus, these trees can take up a lot of space.

Fortunately, these problems can be lessened, or in the case of the space hogs, completely eliminated. Start by practicing good garden techniques. A good mix of plants, an organic growing system and an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach can go a long way toward reducing pest and disease problems. The individual fruit you harvest might not be quite as picture perfect as those grown commercially, but it will be naturally grown and equally, if not more, tasty.

As for space, there are dwarf and semidwarf varieties of most common fruit trees (though check on final size, because even these can be large). Summer pruning is also a must to keep trees in check. You might have to prune one more time than you normally would, but if you start when the tree is small and keep it that way, it's not that involved. If you want to be fancy, consider growing your fruit tree as an espalier or along a fence. Again, the pruning may be more involved, but once you've started, it's easy to keep it going.

Specialty trees also are gaining in popularity. Growers have developed colonnade trees (sentinels that stand upright rather than spreading out), which are a great choice for a modern landscape. There are also more and more multigraft varieties; you may end up with several types of peaches or plums on one trunk. Choose wisely and you can get early, mid-, and late-season varieties to extend the fruit season. Or look for trunks with several different fruits grafted on; they're less common, but they are out there.

A final advantage of smaller trees: You have just enough fruit to feed a family without having to resort to leaving anonymous bags of fruit on your neighbor's doorstep. But if you're still stuck with too much fruit, donate to your local food bank or shelter.



by Shirley Bovshow

In this front-yard edible garden, the espaliered apple tree along the driveway will create a privacy fence when it leafs out. A bonus is that the fruit will be very easy to pick — no ladders needed.



by Gardens &amp; Gables

Orange and lemon trees provide welcome color in a shaded setting, plus the fruit is right at hand for a juicy treat on a hot day.



by AMS Landscape Design Studios,...

With judicious pruning, your fruit trees can function as screens along a fence. Citrus trees, like those shown here, are easy to keep within bounds. For other fruit trees, you will need to employ summer pruning techniques to keep them smaller. Provide enough soft surface space under the trees' canopies so that any falling fruit won't splatter on the patio.



by The Garden Conservancy

Serviceberry, also known as juneberry and shadbush and a host of other names, may not be as familiar as the more popular apples, pears, peaches and cherries, but the fruit is sweet and a great choice for pies. Bonus: showy flowers and great fall color.

Here, the trees are trained as an allée along a side yard. These particular trees lend themselves well to this use, but other fruit trees could also be trained the same way.



by Kathleen Shaughnessy Design

Citrus line this entry, providing year-round foliage as well as fragrant blossoms and plenty of fruit that can stay on the tree for some time.



by Liquidscapes

Espaliering fruit trees is an old-world tradition that is making a comeback. Not only does it keep the trees in bounds (a large apple tree can overpower a small yard), but it shows off the blossoms, leaves and fruit.



by Randy Thueme Design Inc.

The sculptural shapes and grayish leaves of olives are the perfect foil for this contemporary house. While olives can and are grown for their fruit, for most home landscapes you'll probably want to grow the nonfruit type. Even then, they might still produce a stray fruit or two, which will stain surfaces and can easily be tracked into the home. For that reason, place olives in beds that are somewhat removed from main pathways.



by AMS Landscape Design Studios,...

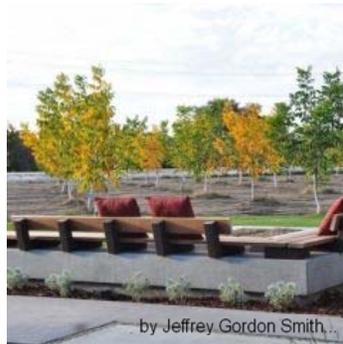
Most citrus, and some other fruit trees, can be grown in pots, which gives you plenty of flexibility when it comes to deciding where to place them. Ask for dwarf varieties at your local nursery and look for a deep container at least 18 inches in diameter.

[See the rest of this landscape](#)



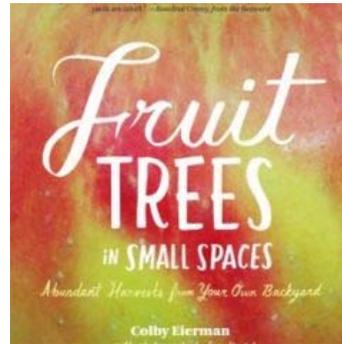
by Landscape

If you're lucky enough to have a true orchard, create a landing pad for enjoying the view in the middle of the space.



by Jeffrey Gordon Smith, ..

If you'd rather view your orchard as a whole than sit in the middle of it, here's a great solution: a large seating area for guests that overlooks the landscape's "working space."



Colby Eierman

For more on growing fruit trees, take a look at *Fruit Trees in Small Spaces*, by Colby Eierman (Timber Press), *Landscaping with Fruit*, by Lee Reich (Storey Publishing) and *Edible Landscaping*, by Rosalind Creasy (Sierra Club Books).

**More:**

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[Citrus 101: Start Your Own Backyard Orchard](#)

[Unexpected Edible Gardens](#)

**Comments**

Liquidscapes says:

Hi Marianne,

I am glad I could contribute to your article.

44 hours ago · [Like](#)

Denise Vilim says:

Great article! I have been considering planting an orange tree or two for awhile. Thanks for the info!

39 hours ago · [Like](#)

Judy says:

The scent of orange and lemon blossoms is other-worldly delicious!

10 hours ago · [Like](#)

janetrayhartman says:

We are attempting to plant a field with dwarf or semi-dwarf fruit trees replacing a wine vineyard. Any suggestions?

7 hours ago · [Like](#)

CAROLE MEYER says:

I love the use of fruit trees in a landscape....beautiful and you get the bonus of eating your home grown fruit.

6 hours ago · [Like](#)