

How to plant an apple tree

There are many varieties of delicious apples, but there are only two categories – eating and cooking. Some apples fall into both groups. Apple trees come in many sizes, including **dwarf varieties** that can be grown in pots or containers.

Equipment

- spade
- apple tree with correct **rootstock**
- mulch
- stake
- bucket of water

Extra items for container planting

- broken clay pots, concrete or polystyrene
- soil-based compost

Method

- 1** Choose a tree that is suitable for your local climate. Apple trees dislike frost, wind and soggy soil. Try to pick a sunny, sheltered place where your tree will thrive, preferably away from other trees and plants. Also choose a species of apple tree with the type of apple you will enjoy eating.
- 2** If the tree is **bare-rooted**, allow the roots to soak in water for 2–4 hours before planting. If the tree is in a container of soil, make sure it is well watered and leave for an hour.
- 3** Spread out the roots of your tree and dig a hole that is twice the **diameter** of the root system, but not deeper than the roots.
- 4** Create a slight mound in the middle of the hole and insert a stake to support your tree. Place the tree next to the stake, making sure the roots are not twisted or crowded, and no wax or wrappings are disturbed.
- 5** Carefully refill the hole using the soil originally taken out, not **fertiliser**. Make sure the soil is between and around the roots and mounded towards the base of the tree.
- 6** Attach the tree to the stake and firmly press down the soil around the tree to get rid of any air pockets. Do not compact the soil completely. Ensure the **grafting join** is at least 5 cm above the soil.
- 7** If you are planting in containers, place some pieces of broken clay pots, concrete or polystyrene in the bottom to help retain moisture. Fill the container with a good quality, soil-based potting **compost** up to the bottom of the tree.

- 8 After planting, slowly water the tree with a large bucket of water (if the ground is dry) and apply a generous layer of **mulch** around the tree.
- 9 Aftercare is important for newly-planted trees until they are established. Even if it is raining, it is likely that a newly-planted tree will need watering at least once a week. Monitor the soil conditions to decide how much water your tree needs. Too much water can damage new roots just as much as not enough.

Glossary

dwarf variety	A variety of plant that has been bred to be smaller than normal for its species.
rootstock	A healthy, growing plant stump that another plant can be grafted (joined) onto. Trees grown from dwarf rootstock will be small and ones grown from standard rootstock will be full-sized.
bare-rooted	Refers to a plant's roots that are not covered or buried in soil.
diameter	A straight line that goes through the centre of a circle and connects two points on the circumference.
fertiliser	A concentrated food that helps plants to grow.
grafting join	The place where two plants are joined so they can grow together.
compost	A rich, organic matter made from decomposed material that helps plants to grow.
mulch	A top layer of compost, soil, gravel or other material, which is placed around a plant to keep in moisture, add nutrients and protect the plant from weeds.

