

HUME CITY COUNCIL PLANTING FRUIT TREES

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1. Choose the right spot

Choose a full sun position – at least 6 hours per day – in a spot that's large enough to fit the mature tree.

For all fruit trees, avoid areas that don't drain well and citrus trees don't like wind, so plant them in a protected spot.

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2. Dig the hole

Dig a hole that is slightly shallower than the tree's pot and at least twice as wide as width of the pot.

Clear surrounding grass, as it will compete for water.

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3. Prepare the hole for planting

The Hume area has clay soil which makes it difficult for water to soak in and for trees to put down roots.

Gypsum, a cheap mineral powder available from gardening and hardware store, helps break up clay soil. Sprinkle a few handfuls of gypsum in the planting hole and water in very well.

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4. Place the tree in the hole

Turn the pot sideways and slide the tree out of pot. Carefully tickle the roots on the sides and bottom to detangle roots. Place the tree in the hole.

The base of the tree's stem should be at ground level. If it's not, lift the tree out and either dig the hole deeper or fill with some soil to make it shallower, then replace the tree.

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5. Back fill the hole

If after watering, the hole took a very long time to drain, you have heavy clay soil. Instead of putting this soil back in the hole, you should back fill with a mix of good quality topsoil and a bucket of compost.

For most soils, back fill the hole with a mixture of the soil you dug from the hole and compost. Sprinkle some slow release organic fertiliser like blood and bone, compost or dynamic lifter around the base of the tree. Water thoroughly.

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6. Mulch and stake the tree

Drive in two stakes around 30cm on either side of the tree and use soft twine to tie to the tree to keep it upright. Mulch with straw or wood chips, leaving a gap around the stem so it does not rot.

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7. Caring for your tree

As the tree grows you'll want to prune it into a vase shape to keep the fruit within reach, encourage the tree to grow out rather than up and remove overcrowding, criss-crossing branches.

Deciduous trees are mainly pruned in winter and lightly pruned in summer/autumn after fruiting, then fertilised in late winter. Feed citrus trees in Autumn and late winter with a slow release organic fertiliser.

For more advice on fruit tree care visit the Sustainable Gardening Australia website, www.sgaonline.org.au

For more workshops and information to help you live green in the Hume area, visit www.hume.vic.gov.au/livegreen