



Fruit gardening calendar

Follow this calendar to maintain your fruit garden and produce great crops all year.

January

Continue to plant fruit trees and bushes up to February.

Begin forcing established rhubarb plants by upending a dustbin over the mulched crown to encourage fresh pink shoots to grow. Don't force the same plants next year. Continue to prune apples, currants, gooseberries, grapes and pears.

February

Buy and pot up strawberry plugs or bare-rooted plants.

Start to sow alpine strawberries indoors.

Continue to plant fruit trees and bushes.

Prune autumn raspberries until the end of March.

Continue to prune apples, currants, gooseberries, and pears.

Mulch around fruit trees and bushes with bulky organic material to retain moisture, suppress weeds and improve soil structure. Mulch unused beds too.

March

Plant cane fruit: blackberries, raspberries and hybrid berry plants.

Continue to sow and grow alpine strawberries indoors.

Continue to buy and pot up strawberry plugs or bare-rooted plants.

Protect pear and plum blossom from frost with fleece.

Prune plums (under four years old).

Harvest forced rhubarb and leave crowns uncovered.

Mulch around fruit (see details in February).

April

Weed fruit beds then plant out raspberries and strawberries.

Protect early strawberries from frost with fleece.

Continue to grow alpine strawberries indoors.

Protect blossom from frost on apples, blackcurrants, pears and plums with fleece.

Watch for signs of pests and diseases attacking your fruit and take action quickly.

Encourage beneficial predatory insects. For example hoverfly larvae eat greenfly - attract the adults with nectar-rich flowers.

May

Protect strawberries from soil splashes and rot with straw or strawberry mats. Start to harden off alpine strawberries ready for planting out mid-May.

Net soft fruit against birds. Remove in late summer once fruiting has finished.

Weed strawberry beds and around fruit trees and bushes.

Water developing fruit plants, especially those near walls or on dwarfing rootstocks, including any trees or bushes planted in the last 12 months, if the weather is dry for more than two weeks. Soak each area thoroughly.

Tie in new growth on trained apples and pears.

Harvest gooseberries and early strawberries.



June

Peg down strawberry runners you want to keep, and remove the rest.

Weed strawberry beds and around fruit trees and bushes.

Continue to water developing fruit if dry.

Thin fruit for larger, tastier crops. Thin dessert apples to 10-15cm apart, culinary apples to 15-20cm; pears to one or two fruit per cluster; plums to about 8cm apart.

Tie in new growth loosely, as it develops, on blackberries, hybrid berries, grapes and raspberries.

Prune mature plum trees (over 4 years old) until July.

Summer-prune gooseberries, red and whitecurrants grown as cordons.

Harvest black, red and whitecurrants, gooseberries, summer raspberries and strawberries.

July

Plan how you are going to look after your fruit garden during the summer. Plants in containers may need watering every day, but a visit once or twice a week should keep outdoor plants ticking over. If you can organise a rota, there should be lots of fruit for helpers to pick.

Net grapes and pears against birds and wasps. Remove in autumn once picking is finished.

Weed strawberry beds and around fruit trees and bushes.

Continue to water developing fruit if dry.

Check ties on fruit trees are not too tight.

Continue to tie in new growth on blackberries, hybrid berries, grapes and raspberries.

Summer-prune cordon currants and gooseberries and trained pears.

Harvest blueberries, currants, gooseberries, early plums, summer raspberries and strawberries.

Tidy up strawberry plants and compost any debris. Sever any rooted runners you want to keep and pot up, or plant in a new bed.

August

Take a break, but browse a few internet sites, look at gardening books and visit some gardens, for ideas and inspiration.

Continue to summer-prune trained pears.

Harvest early apples, blackberries, blueberries, hybrid berries, early pears, plums and summer raspberries.

September

Plant out strawberries – they'll produce a small crop next summer and more in following years. Also plant raspberries.

Summer-prune trained apples.

Cut down old canes on blackberry, hybrid berries and summer raspberry plants to ground level once all the fruit is picked, and tie in new shoots.

Winter-prune currants and gooseberries.

Harvest mid-season apples, blackberries, blueberries, grapes, hybrid berries, early pears, midseason plums and autumn raspberries.



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October

Plan changes or additions to your plot and order fruit trees and bushes from mail order suppliers.

Apples on dwarfing rootstocks can be grown in pots. Autumn raspberries, blueberries, gooseberries and strawberries also do well in containers.

Dig over beds where new fruit is to be planted, removing weeds and incorporating organic material.

Put up post and wire supports where you intend to plant blackberries, hybrid berries or raspberries.

Plant blackberries, grapes, hybrid berries and raspberries.

Continue to plant strawberries. For earlier crops, plant some in pots and move inside in just after Christmas.

Continue to prune blackberries, currants, gooseberries and hybrid berries.

Harvest late apples, blackberries, grapes, mid-season and late pears, and autumn raspberries.

Build raised beds to make cultivation easier, especially on poor soil.

Set up a water butt with a tight fitting lid and a tap, to collect rainwater. Raise it so that you can fit a watering can beneath it.

November

Plant fruit trees and bushes any time from now to February, unless the ground is frozen or waterlogged. Plant rhubarb.

Continue to plant blackberries, raspberries and hybrid berries.

Winter-prune trained and free-standing apples and pears.

Continue to prune currants, gooseberries and grapes.

Harvest late pears.

Set up a compost heap to recycle all your garden waste.

Collect fallen leaves to make leaf mould. Stuff them into black plastic bags, water if dry and leave in a cool, shady spot for a year or so then use as a mulch.

Carry out maintenance on paths, raised beds and other structures before the worst of the winter weather sets in.

December

Continue to plant fruit trees and bushes.

Continue to prune apples, currants, gooseberries, grapes and pears.

Check your tool kit and see what needs cleaning, sharpening, mending or replacing. Painting tool handles bright colours makes them less likely to be lost or borrowed.

Adapted from the Campaign for School Gardening, RHS.



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