



Fruit Trees Not Producing

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Help! My fruit trees aren't producing fruit!

Depending on the species and variety, there could be a few reasons why. First determine if the tree requires a cross-pollinator. Apples, pears, apricots, some plums and cherry-plums require cross-pollination, whereas sour cherries typically self-pollinate. Some fruit trees can pollinate across species (such as chokecherries and plums), but best results will generally come from within the same genus (e.g. apples to apples).

General

- I have a cross-pollinator, but there's still no fruit! Check that the distance between pollinators is within 500 feet. If the intended pollinator is further than 500 feet, it is too far for pollinators to travel. Consider planting one closer. If your neighbors have compatible fruit trees within range, insects may be able to carry pollen across the way. Bloom times must correspond.
- Was there excessive cool and/or rainy weather during flowering? Bees and other pollinators don't like to fly during cold, wet or windy weather. Nothing can be done; hope for better weather next year.
- Do you see pollinating insects in the yard? If not, try adding a variety of flowering plants to attract bees. Some great options are: marigolds, pansies, spurge, trollius and arabis; these typically have similar bloom times to fruit trees. Consider [creating bee friendly habitats](#).
- Check for pests. Unwanted bugs or parasites might eat the smaller fruits before they can grow and ripen. Look for larvae, bite marks, and other signs of pests on the undersides of leaves. If found, bring a sample into Gardenwerks or your Local County Extension office for identification and recommended actions. The [Schutter Diagnostic Lab](#) through MSU is a great resource.
- How's the soil? Soil health is fundamental to plant health. If the soil lacks nutrients, the tree will focus its energies on surviving rather than fruiting. Get a soil test to see what may be missing or in excess.
- Water - If a tree receives too much or too little water during blooming or fruiting, it may not produce.

Apple & Pear Trees

My apple or pear tree isn't producing, and I've already checked everything in the general list! Here are some special considerations for apple and pear trees:

- How old is the tree? If it's 30-40 years old and no longer produces flowers, it may have passed its reproductive life span. Rejuvenation is possible through removing older, unproductive growth to allow new growth to take over. However, if it's older than 40, it may be best to replace it.
- Is it a biennial variety? Some apple trees produce on a cycle: abundant crop one year, poor crop the next, followed by another abundant crop, etc. Look forward to next year with anticipation!
- Consider the intended pollinator:
 - Is it within the same or a similar genus? Apples and pears *can* cross-pollinate, but it is often inconsistent. It's better to pollinate apples-apple and pears-pears as long as the bloom times match.
 - Is it the same variety? Clone varieties cannot cross-pollinate (e.g. a Honeycrisp apple cannot pollinate another Honeycrisp).
 - Is it a sterile variety? Ornamental crabapple trees can cross-pollinate, but some have sterile pollen.