RAISING FRUIT
can sweeten Wyoming dinner tables

By Scott Hininger

Fruit in Wyoming? You bet we can grow fruit in Wyoming!

With a little care and planning, a wide variety of fruit can be raised in many areas of the state.

Apples

When visiting old homesteads in Wyoming, you might be pleasantly surprised to find healthy, productive apple trees. Apple trees can be quite hardy and survive the extremes of Wyoming's climate. My favorite apple variety is Haralred – a crisp, juicy, tart fruit good for cold climates. Other varieties to consider are Honeycrisp, Honeygold, Parkland, State Fair, Sweet Sixteen, and Westland. The list can go on and on … there are so many varieties, and many are grafted on different varieties of rootstock. A variety not known to do well in Wyoming's harsh climate can be grafted to a much hardier variety's rootstock. Nurseries take the roots of a hardy variety of apple tree and graft (attach) the trunk of a different variety to the roots to get the benefits of both trees. Two apple trees are needed for pollination; however, a crab apple can also serve as a pollinator for an apple tree.

Grapes

Grapes are another good pick for Wyoming since they do quite well in drought conditions. Most nurseries either stock or can acquire grape plants. Grape growing research has been conducted at the Sheridan Research Extension Center. For information, call the center's director, Justin Moss, at (307) 737-2415 or visit www.uwyo.edu/uwexpstn/Sheridan.asp. Click on "2007 Grape Workshop Presentations" near the lower left of the page. Limiting water toward the end of the fruit season can increase sweetness of the grapes. Among the best table grapes for Wyoming are Valiant, Beta, Bluebell, Swenson Red, and King of the North. These are good to eat right off the vine and also make very good jelly, jams,

USDA Hardiness Zone Map of Wyoming

	A B	
2		-50 to -45/-45 to -40 F
3		-40 to -35/-35 to -30 F
4		-30 to -25/-25 to -20 F
5		-20 to -15 F

and juice. For wine, the list is a little shorter. For red wine, try Frontenac, Swenson Red, and St. Croix. For white wine, try Frontenac Gris, LaCrescent, and Prairie Star. Grapes are self-pollinating.
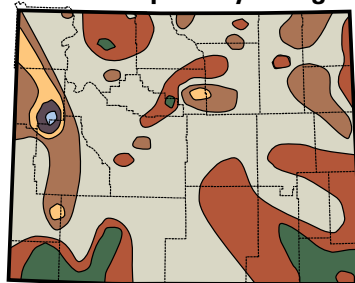
Pears

The European pear has been selected and improved since prehistoric times and was raised as a crop in Europe as early as 1,000 B.C. Pears probably came to the New World with the first settlers on the East Coast and spread westward with pioneers. Asian pears were domesticated in China about the same time European pears were in Europe – 3,000 years ago. Try the following European pear varieties: Gourmet, Hardy, and Harvest Queen. Pears need a cross-pollinating variety. There has been limited research in Wyoming regarding Asian pears.

Plums and Apricots

Plums and apricots are in the same subgenus, *Prunophora*. Hybrids between plums and apricots have been produced recently that are said to be finer fruits than either parent. A "Plumcot" is 50 percent plum, 50 percent apricot; an "Aprium" is 75 percent apricot, 25 percent plum; and the most popular hybrid, the "Pluot," is 75 percent plum and 25 percent apricot. Plum varieties that may do well in Wyoming include Pembina, Toka, and Waneta, and apricot varieties include Hargrand and Moorpark. Most European plums are self pollinating, but Japanese and hybrid plums need specific cross pollinator varieties. Most apricots do not need a pollinator; however, many varieties suited for Wyoming do need a cross-pollinator.

Sweet Cherry

There are less than 100 sweet cherry varieties grown in the major production regions around the world. Bing, Napoleon and/or Royal Ann, Ranier, and Lambert are

the most important varieties in North America. These varieties need cross-pollination by a different variety to set fruit. Cross-pollination is necessary for the Bing cherry and often used are the following varieties: Early Burlat, Black Tartarian, and Van. There are a few self-pollinating varieties, such as Stella and Lapins, but they are of poorer quality than Bing and others that form the basis of the industry. These sweet varieties are rated zone 5 and may not grow everywhere in Wyoming (see zone map page 21). More-adapted for Wyoming are the sour cherry varieties used in pies, such as Montmorency, which is by far the main sour cherry in the United States and Canada, accounting for 99 percent of all production. Also try Meteor or North Star. Sour cherries are self-pollinating.

Tips

First determine which U. S. Department of Agriculture zone you live and look for varieties of fruit trees to match this rating. Consult the zone map for Wyoming.

Next, look for fire blight resistance in the chosen variety. Ask your nursery representative about resistance to fire blight. Information on this disease is in the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service (UW CES) bulletin *Landscape Pests: Integrated Pest Management Strategies for Controlling the Dastardly Dozen*, which can be found at Barnyardsandbackyards. com by clicking on Resources and then Insects.

This disease is easy to manage by selecting resistant trees and with springtime preventative treatments.

Check if the type of fruit tree needs a cross-pollinator. A nursery representative can tell you if the type of fruit tree being considered needs an additional tree for pollination and fruit production. The later the variety blossoms in spring the better, since late spring frosts can knock off or kill the blossoms resulting in poor fruit production. For example, although peach trees can be grown in Wyoming, their flower production is often early and the blossoms – and whatever fruit there would have been – are lost to late frosts.

Finally, look for an early maturing variety since frost arrives early many years and the fruit may be frozen before it has a chance to ripen fully.

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