

# Avocados

**DID YOU KNOW  
AVOCADOS  
ARE VERY HIGH  
IN POTASSIUM  
AND FIBER?**

## **CAN I GROW AVOCADOS?**

Native to southern Mexico, avocados have been growing wild for thousands of years. Most cultivated varieties can now be grown in USDA zones 8-11 (with the notable exception of the Hass, only hardy to zone 9). However, even in these warmer zones, avocados require a little extra care to get established.

When avocados are young, they have a pliable, green trunk that is sensitive to frost and sun, and must be protected by either moving the tree or adding shade cloth and frost blankets at the appropriate season. As they get older, the trunk gradually begins to strengthen (it hardens to bark and turns brown), but this process can take a few years.

If you are growing an avocado tree in zones 8-11 and experience very low or high temperatures, you should be able to plant it safely outside once the bark has turned from green to brown all the way up the trunk. Until, then, you will need to keep it in a pot to be moved indoors for protection when needed. If you live in an area that experiences cool winters that are not too extreme, you may be able to plant directly in the ground and cover the tree with a frost blanket when needed. It would also be helpful to use shade cloth for the tree for sun protection for the first 3 years.

## **PLANTING YOUR AVOCADO**

Whether you choose to put your young avocado tree in a pot for sun and cold protection for the first few years or directly in the ground, you must consider the soil. They prefer a well-draining soil that is acidic and sandy. For pots, we recommend mixing either a 5-1-1 soil blend (recipe on back) or combining 1 part potting soil and 1 part sand. If you choose to put your tree in your native soil, ensure it does not hold water or your avocado will succumb to root rot. Don't forget to elevate the graft on the trunk a few inches from the ground when planting the tree so that it isn't suffocated. Water thoroughly upon planting to get rid of any air pockets in the soil. To monitor how often it will need to be watered after planting, dig your finger into the soil about 4 inches deep. If dry, water it well.



5-1-1 POTTING MIX (well draining)

5 parts pine bark

1 part perlite

1 part peat moss

### WATER

Poor irrigation is one of the main reasons for failure in growing avocado trees. Avocados are native to areas that get daily summer rains, and though they do not do well in soggy conditions and are susceptible to root rot, they also do not like extended dry spells. Watering must be consistent but quickly draining.

### FEEDING YOUR AVOCADO

When your tree is established, fertilize once or twice a year with an organic, slow-release fertilizer. You can also add compost tea, compost and worm castings to encourage microbial activity in the soil.

### PRUNING

Avocado trees do not require a lot of pruning. Pruning low branches that interfere with irrigation or pruning to maintain balance for the tree is sometimes required but not always. Dead branches should also be removed. Beyond this, heavy pruning is not required.

### HARVESTING

A healthy, thriving avocado tree should produce fruit with 2-3 years of planting. The fruit will not ripen on the tree. After picking mature fruit, it must sit for 3-8 days for ripening.

### VARIETIES

**Brazos Belle:** A cold hardy variety down to 15-18 degrees, produces a medium-large, long, purple-black fruit that ripens in September-October

**Fantastic:** These avocado trees can grow up to 35 feet tall. Cold hardy down to 15 degrees, producing a medium to large fruit.

**Mexicola Grande:** This avocado is cold hardy down to 18 degrees and vigorous. This tree can grow 30 feet tall and 25 feet wide.

**Lila:** A cold-hardy variety that can bear temperatures down to 15 degrees.

**Lula:** This avocado is cold hardy down to 28 degrees and has a glossy, green skin with creamy flesh. It also has one of the longest harvesting seasons: from October to December.

**Joey:** A heavy-bearing, purple-skinned avocado. It is hardy down to 15-18 degrees.

**Pancho:** Also known as Poncho, it is cold hardy to 15 degrees. It is a green avocado with hints of pink when ripe.

**Hass:** The Hass is the most popular avocado in the US, making up 95% of the avocados that we see in stores. They have black, pebbly skin and are not considered cold hardy.

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