

Dragon Fruit

DID YOU KNOW
THE FLOWERS OF
DRAGON FRUIT ARE
EDIBLE AFTER
COOKING ?

WHAT IS A DRAGON FRUIT?

Dragon fruit is an exotic cactus that produces medium-size fruit with a striking pink exterior skin. The inside is either white or bright pink, depending on which variety you choose. The taste of the fruit can be compared to that of a milder kiwi without the same level of flavor or sweetness. Dragon fruit flesh is soft, filled with small, crunchy seeds. It is evident that your dragon fruit is ripe when the long bracteoles that grow off the fruit begin to turn brown and wither. Dragon fruit should be picked at this time and refrigerated for at least an hour before eating. This wonderful fruit is loaded with vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that help protect against chronic disease and aging.

HOW TO GROW

Dragon fruit can be grown in zones 9-11 and is a great plant to grow in a container. It thrives with full sun or filtered light but can only take temperatures not exceeding 100 degrees. Your dragon fruit will need a trellis or structure of some sort on which to grow. When left to its natural state, dragon fruit will grow to about 20 ft tall, but we suggest keeping it pruned to the height of whatever trellis you choose to grow your dragon fruit on.



CARE AND MAINTENANCE

It is important to note that dragon fruit does not like wet feet. Don't overwater; wait until the top 1 inch soil layer is dry before watering again. Dragon fruit plants need special care in the winter and should not be kept outside in temperatures under 40 degrees. Dragon fruit should be planted near a wood trellis that allows the branches to grow up tall and then drape over it toward the ground. Keep in mind that several varieties will need a pollinizer and should be planted with another dragon fruit for proper pollination.

COMMON PESTS AND DISEASES

As with any other fruit trees, dragon fruit plants are susceptible to diseases and pests that you will need to be on the lookout for. It is important to check on your dragon fruit regularly to identify and treat any developing diseases or infections.

Sunscald

A disease common to dragon fruit is what's called sunscald. This is not the same as sunburn from too much sun exposure. Sunscald can be found on dragon fruit as a result of the fungus *Hendersonia Opuntia*. Telltale signs of infected dragon fruit are browning and discoloration on the cactus pads. This is followed by the cactus cracking and decaying. Although it starts in one specific area of the plant, the sunscald will begin to spread to the rest of the plant if the infected areas are not removed. When infected with Sunscald, the best course of action is to remove the infected areas to prevent spreading to other parts of the plant.

Ants and aphids

Aphids are a common pest that can be found on dragon fruit and will easily get out of control if not properly cared for. The sweet honeydew substance produced by aphids will attract ants to the dragon fruit. The ants will protect aphids from predators furthering the pest issue. A strong spray of water from your hose can remove some of the pests, and neem oil can be applied to your plant during cooler evening temps to repel the aphids as well.

Common Varieties

Bloody Mary, Zamorano Red, Red Jaina, Vietnamese Jaina White, Yellow Thai, American Beauty

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