

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 or yellow exterior skin. The inside is either white or bright pink, depending on which variety you choose. The taste of the fruit is refreshing rather than sugary sweet. Dragon fruit flesh is soft like a melon, filled with small, edible seeds. This wonderful fruit is loaded with vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that help protect against chronic disease and aging.

PLANTING

Dragon fruit can be grown in zones 9-11 and is a great plant to grow in a container. It thrives in full sun or filtered light but can only take temperatures under 100 degrees. Dragon fruit should be planted near a trellis that allows the branches to grow up tall and then drape over it toward the ground. 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. Keep in mind that several varieties will need a pollinizer and should be planted with another dragon fruit for proper pollination.

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.

HARVESTING

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.



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.

Cactus Rust

Red or orange spots on a dragon fruit plant indicate a fungal or bacterial infection. The most common cause is "cactus rust," but they can also signal Anthracnose or Botryosphaeria dothidea. These diseases thrive in overly humid conditions.

Apply Organic Treatments: For mild or early spots, spray the plant with a mixture of equal parts 3% hydrogen peroxide and water, or use a natural Neem oil mixed with water and a few drops of dish soap. If the infection is aggressive, treat it weekly with a copper fungicide. Dust open cuts on the stems with natural cinnamon to prevent new infections

POPULAR VARIETIES

Connie Mayer, Zamorano Red, Yellow Palora, Vietnamese White, and American Beauty

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