

GROWING AND USING ASIAN PEARS

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Most people in this area are somewhat familiar with the Nijiseiki (20th Century) Japanese pear, but are not aware that more than 10 other varieties are also grown in the Pacific Northwest. Of these I am familiar with three: Nijiseiki, Hosui, and Chojuro. The Nijiseiki is especially attractive looking, having a thin, pale lemon skin color. It has a mild, but very tasty flavor and is very juicy. Hosui has a light tan, lightly russeted skin and a somewhat more intense flavor. The Chojuro has a browner, deeply russeted skin, and a flavor between Nijiseike and Hosui.

Like most pear trees, these grow to be about 15 feet tall, so it's fairly easy to work them into the landscape of most small yards. I currently grow only a single variety (Chojuro) which has a maximum height of about 12 feet and a spread of 8 to 10 feet. It is located in a narrow parking strip and I keep it trimmed to about 10 feet in height and 7 to 8 feet in width.

All of these trees will produce a nice crop without another pear tree nearby but will produce even more with a good pollinator. However, I find that it is necessary to do some thinning with even my single tree, and I still get about 40 pounds of fruit from it.

A four to six foot tree will cost about \$20.00 and will blossom and begin to produce fruit about three years after planting. A mature tree in full blossom is very pretty!

Like apples and European pears, Asian pear trees require moderate pruning and some kind of Codling Moth control. Being rather sensitive to organophosphate sprays, I have elected to bag my fruit for Codling Moth control. This requires an eight foot stepladder, a large supply of small brown lunch bags (try Costco), and a supply of garden or grocery "twist-ems". After thinning the fruit (about one inch

size) cover each remaining fruit with a paper bag tightly wrapped around the stem. Wrap a "twist-em" tightly around the stem at the neck of the bag. This may sound like a tedious job, but it only has to be done once, just before the Codling Moth breeding begins. Compare the cost and time with having to spray every 7 to 10 days until harvest!

Asian Pears are harvested from late summer to early fall. Most varieties store well for two months or so, but significant shrinkage and withering will occur if they are stored too long, even in a refrigerator.

Because these fruits remain quite crisp, even when fully ripe, they are generally used more like apples than the European pear. They are excellent eaten fresh, both as fruit chunks, and in fruit salads, in place of, or together with apples. They are also excellent thinly sliced and dried. I like them very much in both of these ways but my real favorite is pear jam. It is really excellent on toast or muffins. The recipe follows:

ASIAN PEAR JAM

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| 4 | lbs. Pears |
| 2 | cups water |
| ½ | cup white or brown sugar |
| 1 | tsp. cinnamon |
| ½ | tsp. cloves |
| ½ | tsp. allspice |
| 1 | whole lime, quartered, seeded and run through a food grinder or food processor |
| 1 | pkg. low or no-sugar pectin |

Wash, peel and core the pears. Cut into 3/16 inch slices. Place into a cooking pot with the water. Cook

until very soft. Mash and mix into a uniform pulpy sauce, about the consistency of applesauce.

Add sugar, pectin, lime and spices and mix thoroughly. Simmer for about one hour. Pour into hot, sterilized jars, leaving 1/2 inch head space. Cover and store in refrigerator. Store in freezer for long term storage.

DO NOT CAN.