

Slug: Ask the Master Gardener  
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What do you know about kiwi, the strange, brown, fuzzy fruit you see on the produce counters in supermarkets? If your answer is "Not much!", here are a few facts that may be of interest to you. Kiwi is a subtropical vine that originated in China and has just recently been introduced to Pacific Northwest gardeners. The vines can grow to be 30 feet long and produce berry-like fruit about the size of a hen's egg. Under the right growing conditions these vines will produce prodigious amounts of fruit. The vines are winter hardy to 12 degrees F. The hardy varieties will withstand temperatures of -25 degrees F.

Kiwi is a dioecious plant, meaning that the male and female flowers are produced on separated plants. For good pollination, plant one male plant for every eight female plants. The vines are vigorous and need to be supported on sturdy trellises made of 4"x4" posts with 2"x6" cross arms and 12-gauge wire. Plant your kiwis in a sunny spot that does not get chilling winter winds. Although kiwi vines are hardy, young vines and early tender shoots are susceptible to late frost injury. Male vines are a little less hardy than female vines.

Kiwis do best in deep, well-drained soils 2 to 3 ft deep. They are very sensitive to standing water. Raised beds can be created if poor drainage and shallow soil cannot be corrected any other way. In choosing the variety of kiwi you wish to grow, it is best to do some research to be sure you get the exact kind of fruit you want. The fuzzy kiwi fruit Actinidia deliciosa is the supermarket kiwi. The cultivar 'Saanichton' and 'Hayward' both do well in our climate. But, if you do not care for the fuzzy skin of A. deliciosa, look for the smooth-skinned kiwi fruit. The A. arguta or hardy kiwis are very vigorous and produce high quality fruit that is smaller than that of A. deliciosa. The cultivar 'Ananasnaya' is the most popular of the hardy kiwis. A. kolomikta also referred to as kolomikta or 'Arctic Beauty', has sweet fruit with intense flavor. This vine is also valuable in the landscape because of its showy pink variegated leaves.

While purchasing your kiwi vines do not forget to get male vines of the same type as the female vine you have purchased. You must have a fuzzy male for fuzzy female vines and a male kolomikta for those females. To learn more about the care of kiwi ask for the PNW bulletin 507 at the WSU Extension office located at 306 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street in Mount Vernon. You can also find information about kiwi on the internet.

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This column is written by Washington State University/Skagit County certified Master Gardeners. Questions may be submitted to WSU/Skagit County Cooperative Extension, 306 S. First Street, Mount Vernon, WA 98273-3805.