



*Seen around town, these usually aren't blooming in January in the Greater Houston area
('cept maybe in Galveston & other points south): l to r, esperanza, plumbago, pink magnolia and firespikes*

TOP 10 MISTAKES GARDENERS MAKE WITH FRUIT TREES

By Bob Dailey

Montgomery County Master Gardeners

Gardeners love to be able to walk outside and pick ripe fruit from a tree they have planted themselves. But even we experienced gardeners can make mistakes when planting and caring for them. Here are a few things you shouldn't do when planting and caring for fruit trees.

- 1. Plant at the wrong time of the year.** Winter- when they are dormant - is the best time to put in fruit trees.
- 2. Put a \$50 plant into a \$3 hole.** Do have your soil tested. Most plants like a slightly acidic soil with a pH of 6.0 to 6.5. Amend the soil.
- 3. Underestimate the size of the adult tree.** That plum sapling might look small now, but in five years, it will



www.natureswayresources.com

have a spread of 6- 8 feet, and be just as high.

4. **Improperly prune before planting.** The internet has a large number of videos on pruning fruit trees.
5. **Forget soil amendments.** Fruit trees need nutrients. Good compost and organic fertilizer work.
6. **Neglect to feed the soil.** Maintaining a healthy microbial population in the soil is vitally important to the health of the tree.
7. **Plant the wrong variety.** Check with experts about which varieties do best here. A great list of varieties that do well in our area can be found at: Aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu
8. **Water too much or too little.** A fruit tree needs water, but doesn't need to be drowned. Most people water too much. Watering a plant every day will cause root rot and kill the plant. Water deeply twice a week. Water at the base of the tree, not up on its leaves, and water in the morning. If it rains during the week, forego or shorten watering times.
9. **Confuse mulch and compost.** Compost is almost completely degraded (composted) organic material. Mulch is generally shredded and aged wood chips, leaves, straw and the like.
10. **Neglect berms and mulch.** Build a little "wall" around the edge of the hole with the soil left over from the planting. This will help hold in water. Mulch inside the berm. Keep the mulch at least 6" from the tree trunk.

Contact Bob at bdailey@wjpa.org