

# Cherries

## Prunus

### A Garden Guide

Sweet Cherries (*Prunus avium*) and Tart Cherries (*Prunus cerasus*) have been cultivated for thousands of years in Western Asia and Eastern Europe. Korean, or Oriental Bush Cherries (*Prunus japonica*) are found from China to Korea.

Spring flowers range from white to light pink,

flesh is firm and juicy, and surrounds a pit. For best production and fruit quality,

**plant at least two different varieties.** Space Sweet Cherries 35-40' apart; dwarfs, 5-10' apart. Space Tart Cherries 20-25' apart; dwarfs, 8-10' apart. Space Korean Cherries 15-10' apart.



**Siting:** In WNC, our relatively humid climate means that **siting is critical**. Cherries need plenty of space, with good air flow, in full sun (6-8 hours). Ideally plant them in the middle of a slope. Avoid planting them in frost pockets, at the bottom of a slope. Late frosts can damage blooms. Select for high chill varieties (at least 750 hours).

**Soil and Planting:** Cherries prefer a pH of 6.0-7.0, with moist, well-draining soil. A good soil test will tell you exactly what to add, but usually in our soils, Cherries will need at least 1/3rd soil conditioner, up to 1/3rd rich composts, and generous amounts of lime mixed with our native clay. Applying mycorrhizae directly to the roots, just prior to planting, will improve plant resilience. Dig a hole 2-3x as wide as the pot, only as deep as the pot, plant the tree in the soil at the same height as it was in the pot or a little bit higher. Apply 2-3" of hardwood mulch to the root zone, do not let it touch the trunk or any woody roots that might be visible.

**Fertilizing:** Many options - Espoma Tree-tone® applied in the spring is an excellent choice. Compost tea is a wonderful snack for your plants in the spring and summer.

**Watering:** Slowly, deeply, and once weekly during the first growing season. Supplemental water will be needed during dry periods - drought can compromise fruit production. Less water will be needed during rainy periods. Remember, too much or too little water can cause significant health issues.

**Pruning:** Prune trees for an open center form, to help create good air circulation. Remove any dead and crossing branches. NC State Extension has several videos on YouTube demonstrating how to prune Cherries. They also have an excellent publication called “Training and Pruning Fruit Trees in North Carolina.”

**Sanitation:** Remove ALL dropped foliage and fruit from your property, do not compost it, lest they be harboring pests or pathogenic fungal spores.

**Organic Spray Schedule:** Organic products work best as a preventative. With our humidity and pests, it pays to get out there and protect your trees as best as you can.

**Late winter - before bud swell** - use a Copper based fungicide when daytime temps are 40-45°F (prevent fungal issues), Horticulture Oil, Neem Oil, or Insecticidal Soap when daytime temps are 45-55°F with no frost predicted that night (knock back pests that may have overwintered). Use Bt, Tanglefoot, or Diatomaceous Earth for Climbing Cut Worms.

**Pre-bloom** - buds show color but haven't opened yet - use Insecticidal soap (protects buds from a variety of newly hatching bud-sucking pests). Use Bt, tanglefoot, or Diatomaceous Earth for Climbing Cut Worms. Use Pyrethrin or Bt for Fruit Tree Leafroller.

**Bloom** - Apply Nothing!! Bees are providing their valuable pollination services at this time, and must be protected.

**Petal Fall** - Neem Oil, Copper, or Sulphur to prevent Brown Rot and other fungal pathogens (note: do not use Sulphur if temps are above 85°F). Bt for Fruit Tree Leafrollers. Neem Oil or Insecticidal Soap for a variety of pests.

**Late Spring thru Harvest** - Inspect trees weekly. Neem oil or Sulphur for fungal issues. Bt for Fruit Tree Leafrollers. Neem Oil or Insecticidal Soap for a variety of pests. Copper or Sulphur for shothole and other fungal issues. Neem Oil for Spider Mites.

**Post Harvest** - Neem Oil, Copper, or Sulphur for fungal issues. Insecticidal Soaps for Spider Mites.

**Rotate products to help prevent pests from developing resistance to them.**

Version 1.0 Feb 21



76 Monticello Road Weaverville, NC 28787 828-645-3937 <https://reemscreek.com/>