

Growing vigorous kiwi takes care and a strong trellis

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If you have a good strong trellis, are a bit of a gambler and have a love of kiwifruit, there's no reason not to grow your own crop. As vigorous as they are, though, don't expect to plop these vines into the ground and

stand back.

Kiwifruit need some attention to yield the large amount of fruit they're capable of producing. Proper siting, fertilizing, watering and, most importantly, protecting from [cold weather](#), are necessary to keep your plant in good shape, said Bernadine Strik, berry specialist for the Oregon State University Extension Service.

There are three types of [kiwifruit](#), Strik explained, the most common being the fuzzy kiwifruit (*Actinidia deliciosa*) available at the [grocery store](#), usually the cultivar called "Hayward." Joining the lineup are hardy kiwifruit (*A. arguta*); and kolomikta or arctic kiwifruit (*A. kolomikta*), which is not often grown for fruit. Instead, gardeners become enamored of the variegated pink leaves and use it as an ornamental vine.

Hardy kiwifruit, also called kiwiberries because of the grape-sized fruit, are most suited for home gardens because they are best adapted to Oregon's climate, Strik said. The highly aromatic fruit has smooth, green skin—sometimes with a red blush—that's edible, making them great for snacking. They are better adapted to our region because they are very winter cold hardy and fruit will vine ripen from mid-September into mid-October. You'll sometimes find them at farmers markets and some grocery stores.

Fuzzy kiwifruit don't ripen on the vine and are harvested in fall when they are "green ripe." They can be stored in a cold area for months, which is why you'll find fuzzy kiwifruit in grocery stores year-round. They are best grown in warmer regions like California, because vines can get winter cold injury in most areas of Oregon.

Of the hardy kiwifruit, the easiest to find are "Ananasnaya," (sometimes called "Anna") with jade-colored skin, bright green flesh, black seeds and a pineapple-type flavor (the name means "pineapple" in Russian) and

"Ken's Red," a New Zealand cultivar with olive green skin and darker green flesh with deep red streaks.

"The young shoots and fruit of all kiwifruit species are sensitive to frost injury," Strik said. "Temperatures of 30 degrees F or less for only 30 minutes can severely damage newly emerging shoots in the late winter through spring."

To reduce the chance of damage, grow kiwi plants in warmer areas of the garden that are protected from frost, avoiding low areas or cool sites. When temperatures are forecast to drop to 32 degrees F or lower, drape the vine with a row cover before sunset and remove it when temperatures rise above freezing.

Strik, who is the author of Extension's publication *Growing Kiwifruit in Your Home Garden*, offers additional tips:

- Kiwifruit vines are either female, which produce the fruit; or male, which are vital for pollination and fruit production. Be sure to plant both unless a neighbor has the correct male (same species). See photos in the above publication to tell the difference between male and female flowers.
- Build a substantial arbor or T-bar trellis (photos are included in the above publication) that's tall enough to stand under for harvest; the stronger the better since the vines can grow 15 feet wide and produce up to 100 pounds of fruit.
- Plant 10 to 15 feet apart in spring in deep, well-drained soil in a sunny, protected area of the garden. Don't skimp on this advice since kiwi vines are susceptible to root rot.
- Water a couple of inches of water a week during the growing season. A drip system works best.
- Fertilize by carefully increasing the amount each year as the vine matures (check publication for application rates).

- Prune females heavily in December. If it gets later in the season, the vines will excrete large amounts of sap, which dismays gardeners. "I often get people saying, "My vine is bleeding to death," Strik said. "So, it's best to prune early. If you are pruning late, don't worry too much about the sap loss." Prune males after bloom in late June. When pruning a mature [vine](#), remove about 70 percent of the wood that grew last season. Most of the wood removed is older wood that already has fruited. For some pruning diagrams see the publication; a link to pruning modules containing videos is also listed in the publication.
- In warmer regions of Oregon harvest fuzzy kiwifruit in late October to early November when they are still hard, but the seeds are black. They can be stored in a cold (32 to 40 degrees F) area for several months. To ripen small amounts, put in a slightly vented plastic bag with apples or bananas. Harvest kiwiberries, which do not all ripen at the same time, when they are soft to the touch. They should be eaten right away; or in order to store in the refrigerator for a few weeks, harvest fruit when they are still firm, but seeds are black (early September). When they are too ripe, the fruit will tear at the stem end. You can enjoy them throughout the winter by freezing them and letting them partially thaw before eating.

More information: www.petronas.com/

Provided by Oregon State University

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