

FOR RELEASE WEEK OF JANUARY 20, 2016

TITLE: START A HOME ORCHARD

BY: RICKY ENSLEY, COUNTY EXTENSION COORDINATOR

POLK COUNTY EXTENSION, 20 N. MAIN STREET, CEDARTOWN

770-749-2142

uge2233@uga.edu

Growing fruit at home can be a joy or an unsightly burden. The final outcome will depend on what type of fruit you plant this winter. Consider three factors: what you like to eat, how much time you are willing to spend growing fruit, and if you have the right location to grow fruit.

The first factor – what you like to eat – I'll leave up to you. The second factor is how much time you can devote to growing fruit. Some types of fruit require a lot of spraying such as apples, peaches, plums, and bunch grapes. Other fruits require little spraying including blueberries, pears, figs, and blackberries. The third factor is if you have the right location to grow fruit. If your lot is shady (less than four hours of sun per day) forget fruit, and grow leafy vegetables. If your lot is poorly-drained, try blueberries and pears. Peaches and plums need very well drained soil. Blueberries do need acidic soil (like azaleas) for good growth.

Consider another aspect – is the fruit plant attractive? Apples, peaches, plums, and blackberries look nice in the spring, while blueberries and pears have beautiful fall color. Blueberries make a good hedge while grapes and brambles can be used as a fence. Figs have large leaves and are most attractive when planted toward the back of the yard.

Properly managed home fruit plantings can produce enough fruit to preserve and eat fresh. Poorly managed fruit plantings are ugly and unproductive. You may be better off visiting a Georgia fruit farm unless you're willing to exert some effort each year.