

Kiwi fruit grows on extremely vigorous and hardy deciduous vines that can be very decorative. Most kiwi plants have glossy green leaves; the male 'Arctic Beauty' (*Actinidia kolomikta*) has variegated pink, green, and white leaves. There are several different species that will produce in the Northwest. They have similar cultural requirements, but there are differences in hardiness, fruit size, and ripening time. All produce fruit on female plants but require a male for pollination; one male can pollinize up to eight females. (A few cultivars are partially self-fertile but will produce heavier crops with a male pollinizer.)

Kiwis prefer a deep, loose-textured soil. They need good drainage to prevent root damage, but they require summer watering for fruit production. Amend heavy soils with plenty of organic matter. Kiwis do best with a southern or western exposure. Withhold water from mid-September on if possible to encourage the fruit to ripen and the vines to harden off.

Kiwis are heavy feeders because of their vigorous growth. Fertilize twice a year, in early spring and again in early summer. A slow-release nitrogen source like cottonseed meal is excellent, or use a slow-release all-purpose fertilizer. Do not feed after midsummer, as that would encourage new growth that would not be hardy in the fall.

Kiwis are vigorous vines that will require a good sturdy trellis. Commercially they're usually grown on t-bar trellis. It generally takes three years to bring your vines into production, and they can produce for over 30 years. A mature vine can produce up to 300 pounds of fruit.

As a deciduous vine, kiwis can also be a good choice to train over a sturdy arbor or pergola for summer shade.

To train your kiwi vines:

First year: Allow the vine to grow up the middle of the trellis before you let it branch. When the vine is several inches above the wire, pinch it back to 2-3" below the wire. Select 2 canes to be permanent cordons (prune any others off). The first dormant season, cut these two back to 24-36" long. (If the vine doesn't reach the wire its first year, cut it back to four to eight buds above the ground, retain a single strong vine the next year, then the second winter select your two cordons and prune them.)

Second year: Select fruiting laterals spaced about 24-36" apart and allow the main cordons to continue growing. Cut those that reach beyond mid-wire. If the vine has grown well, canes emerging from the lateral will produce fruit this year. Around May or June, cut the canes back to 6-10 buds beyond the last blossom. This keeps the vine from twisting around and channels energy to the fruit. Remove most new laterals rising from the cordon, especially those with strong upright growth. Leave a few to replace old fruiting canes.

Third and following years: After a cane has fruited twice, remove it completely and let a new lateral replace it. Otherwise, prune as for the second year.

VARIETIES

FUZZY KIWI (*Actinidia deliciosa*) This is the familiar supermarket kiwi; its fruit is egg-sized with a fuzzy brown skin. Fuzzy kiwi is hardy to about 10°F (lower with protection). The fuzzy kiwi requires a longer ripening season than the hardy varieties; in the Pacific Northwest, the plants should, like grape vines, be grown in the warmest and sunniest spot possible.

Hayward Female. Produces a good-flavored, large, sweet fruit with green flesh. Ripens in October. Fruit should be picked while hard; can be stored for 6 months. The standard commercial supermarket kiwi.

Saanichton Large, sweet, green-fleshed fruit is blocky in shape. From British Columbia; will withstand colder temperatures than other fuzzy varieties.

Male/Matua Pollinizer for up to eight female fuzzy kiwi plants.

HARDY KIWI (*Actinidia arguta*) *Actinidia arguta* bears clusters of fruit the size of large grapes. Hardy kiwi skin is smooth and tender, so the fruit can be eaten without peeling. The flavor is usually a little sweeter than fuzzy kiwis. The vines are very cold hardy and the fruit will ripen in cooler locations than fuzzy kiwis. Vines will also produce fruit with either full sun or half a day of sun, unlike their fuzzy cousins. A great choice for the Northwest!

Anna (*Anasnaja*) One of the best-flavored kiwis—the name means ‘pineapple’ in Russian. Fruit is smooth, sweet, green, and about 1 ½” long. Ripens in September. Fruit can be stored up to 2 months.

Hardy Red Female. Bears good crops of very sweet-tart, tasty fruit with cranberry red skin and red flesh. A favorite in taste tests.

Male/Andrey Pollinizer for up to eight female arguta kiwi plants. Shiny green foliage.