

THE APPLE TREE--PLANTING AND PRUNING

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EACH pupil could grow an apple tree of his own in his neighborhood. If you should attempt it, suppose you try the following: In the fall take the seed of an apple, say the crab apple, it is good to start with, and keep it in a cool place during the winter. The simplest way to do this is to bury it in damp sand. In the spring plant it in a rich loose soil. Good care should be taken of the young shoot as soon as it appears above the ground in order to make good your planting. You want to make it grow as tall and as straight as possible during the first year, hence you should give it rich soil and protect it from animals. Before the ground freezes in the fall take up your young tree, with the soil that was around it, and keep it all winter in a cool damp place.

Now it will not do when spring comes to set out your carefully tended tree, for an apple tree from seed will not be a tree like its parent, but will tend to resemble a more distant ancestor. The distant ancestor that the young apple tree is most likely to resemble is the wild apple, which is small, sour, and otherwise far inferior to the fruit we wish to grow. It makes little difference, therefore, what kind of apple seed we plant, the tree will not bear the fruit we want, so we have to force it to do so by a process called grafting.

The apple tree that you grafted should be set out in the spring. Dig a hole three or four feet in diameter where you wish to grow your tree. Place the tree in the hole, using every care to preserve all the fine roots; spread the roots out fully, water them, and pack fine, rich soil firmly about them. Place stakes about the young tree to protect it from injury. If the spot selected is in a windy location lean your tree slightly toward the prevailing winds.

You must prune your tree as it grows. The object of pruning is to give the proper shape and to promote fruit bearing. Pruning is one of the most important and yet least understood crafts that is practiced in the growing of fruit. Every tree is a rule unto itself and no two trees can be pruned exactly the same. The pruner should be quick to detect the weak as well as the strong marks of a variety or individual. He must be resourceful, and know the nature of the tree. His duty is to make the best of every individual tree regardless of its condition or shape.

When to prune: The best time to prune is either in the winter or before the buds start in the spring. Winter pruning tends to favor wood