

Pears

Pears are an excellent choice for the Central Texas home gardener. A mature pear can be 20' tall and 15' wide, provide a beautiful spring bloom, excellent fall color, and delicious (and prolific!) fruit. Certain varieties are semi-self fertile, and can produce a reliable crop as an individual tree. Others will do best with a second tree as a pollinator¹. Pears should have their fruit removed through the first 3 full growing seasons. This allows the tree to form a proper structure to accommodate future crops². Pear trees are tolerant of both heat and drought, and can thrive in less-than-ideal conditions. However, better soil preparation and tree care equals better production! Consult our handout *Planting & Maintenance Guide for Fruits, Nuts, & Berries* for complete instructions. Minimize the use of compost and fertilizer on pears. High fertility promotes rapid, succulent growth, which promotes fire blight. See our handout on *Fire blight*.

For better fruit and overall health of the tree, the fruit must be thinned when pears are about the size of marbles. Leave one pear per cluster, and space the clusters approximately every six inches. Be careful not to damage the spurs (the short branches) that produce the flower buds and fruit. Pears (except Asian) do not ripen well on the tree. Harvest maturity is indicated with a slight change from green to yellow. While some enjoy crisp fruit directly off the tree, they will further ripen in 2 – 3 weeks at room temperature in a ventilated area.

Pear Varieties for Central Texas (chilling hours) Note: The familiar European varieties of pear such as Bosc, D'Anjou, and Bartlett are not grown here because of their extreme susceptibility to Fire blight.

Ayres (450) A medium-sized fruit with juicy, sweet flesh, ripening in August. Yellow skin with brown russet and red blush. Good for fresh eating and canning. *Highly resistant to fire blight.* From Tennessee Agriculture Experiment Station in 1954. *Pollinate with Kieffer.*

Chojuro (Asian) (500) Medium-sized fruit with mildly sweet, crisp white flesh. Ripens early to mid-August. Greenish-brown to russet brown skin. *Highly productive.* Pick when first yellow-brown to avoid bruising. Good fall color. *Pollinator is Shinko.*

Kieffer (400) – Large fruit that is crisp and juicy. Flesh is white, with a gritty texture and greenish-yellow skin. Fruit store well and are good for cooking and canning. Some like the texture of fresh fruit, however, to reduce grit for fresh eating, store fruit in a paper bag 2 – 4 weeks at room temperature. A consistent, heavy bearer, ripening late September to October. *Highly resistant to fire blight.* From Roxborough, Pennsylvania, 1873. *Semi-self fertile.*

Leconte (200) – Medium-sized, attractive, juicy, aromatic, bell-shaped fruit. Ripens August – early September. Bright yellow skin with red blush. Good fresh eating. *Fair fire blight resistance.* *Pollinate with any non-Asian pear.*

Moonglow (500) – Large fruit with soft, moderately juicy, gritless flesh. Brownish-green skin with mild, sub-acid flavor. Fruit is good fresh and processed. *Good fire blight resistance.* Excellent pollinator that bears early. *Pollinate with any non-Asian pear.*

Orient (400) – Medium to large fruit with slightly sweet, firm, juicy, white flesh. Yellow, russeted skin. Heavy producer from August to September. Fair fresh eating, good for canning & baking. *Highly resistant to Fire blight.* *Semi-self fertile.*

¹ University of Georgia Extension

² Penn State Extension

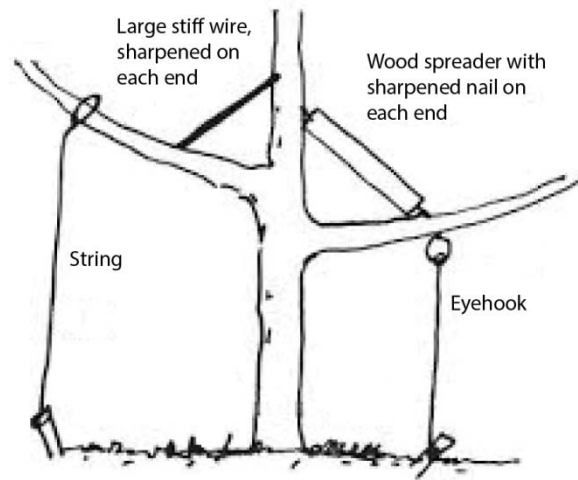
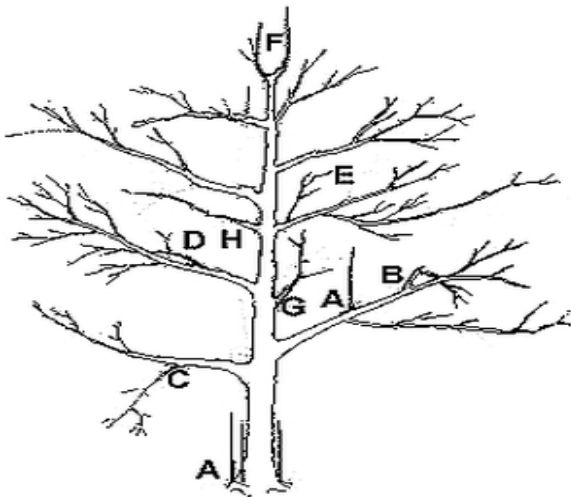
Shinko (Asian) (450) – Medium to large with fine-textured flesh and excellent, rich, sweet flavor. Ripens August to September. Brownish-green russeted skin. *Very good fire blight resistance. Pollinate with Chojuro.*

Shinseiki (Asian) (350-450) (When Available) – Medium fruit with good to excellent flavor. Ripens early – mid July. Yellow skin with brown freckling. Good fresh eating. *Moderate fire blight resistance. Semi-self fertile.*

Southern Bartlett (450) (When Available) – Large fruit with excellent quality and, juicy, fine-textured flesh, ripens in August. A chance sport of the Bartlett pear found on an old Louisiana homestead. *Heavy producer, good fire-blight resistance. Semi-self fertile, best pollination with Orient.*

Warren (600-800) – Small to medium fruit with excellent, smooth, buttery textured flesh; Red-blushed skin, ripens in August. Slow to bear fruit. *Resistant to fire blight.* Discovered in Hattisburg, Mississippi by T. O. Warren in 1976. *Best pollination with Orient or Kieffer*

Pears can be pruned according to the central leader method. Suggested pruning cuts for a pear are listed below³. Pear trees naturally develop narrow angled, upright branches. To train properly angled scaffold branches, either weight them, tie them to pegs in the ground or brace them apart with spacer sticks. Visualize the angle to be 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock on a watch. Pears are also excellent candidates for training into an espalier form.



Methods of spreading scaffolding

The following should be removed.

- A. Suckers.
- B. Stubs or broken branches.
- C. Downward-growing branches
- D. Rubbing or criss-crossing branches
- E. Shaded interior branches
- F. Competing leaders
- G. Narrow crotches
- H. Whorls



³ Clemson Co-Operative Extension