



# Plums for Georgia Home Gardens

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**P**lums are not only popular for cooking and jam making, they're enjoyed fresh as well. The sweeter varieties are among the more delicious dessert fruits.

The gardener can choose from among several varieties. 'Methley,' a small but sweet early season variety, is self-fertile and crops reliably. 'Methley,' however, crops better when planted with another variety. 'Morris' is a commercial plum that is productive and firmer. Two Auburn releases, 'AU Rubrum' and 'AU Producer,' produce reliably. Several Georgia releases like 'Spring Satin' (plum-apricot hybrid), the yellow-fleshed 'Byrongold' or the tasty 'Rubysweet,' are good for fresh eating. Many gardeners prefer plums that are best when eaten green, like 'Bruce,' 'Six Weeks,' 'Robusto' or 'Segundo.' Whatever you choose, you'll need at least two varieties for pollination and fruitfulness, since plums are generally not self-fertile. When considering other varieties, choose trees recommended for zones 7 or 8. A good central web site that lists fruit tree nurseries is [ssfruit.cas.psu.edu/appendix/appendix1.htm](http://ssfruit.cas.psu.edu/appendix/appendix1.htm). Several Tennessee nurseries sell plum trees appropriate to the southeast as well.

Plums will grow all over the country but often flower early, making them vulnerable to spring frosts. In the home garden or landscape, proper placement can reduce the vulnerability of fruit and flowers to frost. Placement next to a wall that is not facing north can protect against cold winds, mitigate temperature inversions, and allow heat storage. Alternatively, placing plum trees on a grade that allows drainage of cold air to lower areas of the yard or home orchard will provide protection on frosty nights. Another trick some gar-

deners use is to keep outdoor Christmas lights on fruit trees to protect them on cold nights.

A well-drained sandy loam soil at a pH of 6.5 is ideal for growing plums. Have the soil tested before planting. Contact your county extension office to make arrangements to have your soil tested. The test will determine how much lime and phosphorus you should add to the soil before planting. Work these amendments into the soil throughout the rooting depth, generally 18-24 inches. Do not add fertilizer to the planting hole. Apply 1 pound of 10-10-10 in March of the first and second years, as well as 1 and 1½ cups of calcium nitrate in May and July of the first and second years, respectively. Thereafter, apply ⅔ cup of calcium nitrate each March and August, being careful not to place the fertilizer against the tree's bark.

Immediately after planting a 3-foot, one-year-old tree in February or March, cut it off at 18-24 inches to force bud break of lower buds. Then, during the summer, select about four shoots that are at a 25-30 degree angle from the vertical, forming the framework for a "bowl" or "vase." The ultimate shape of the tree depends on its growth habit. Plum trees have forms ranging from spreading to upright and need to be pruned with the natural shape in mind. Prune the upright type to spreading limbs and the spreading type to more upright limbs. These will become the scaffolds that will bear fruit close to the trunk, keeping it in easy reach for harvest.

The table on the back summarizes plums for home use in Georgia.

Table 1. Summary of Japanese plums for home use in Georgia

Cultivar	Fertility	Skin/Flesh Color	Ripening Date	Cropping
Dessert/Preserve Quality				
Methley	Self*	Red-purple/Blood	6/03	Reliable
Morris	Not	Dark red/Red	6/16	Productive
AU Rubrum	Not	Dark red/Red	6/15	Reliable
AU Producer	Not	Dark red/Red	6/20	Very Productive
Spring Satin	Not	Red-black/Yellow	6/02	Productive
Byrongold	Not	Yellow/Yellow	6/30	
Rubysweet	Not	Red-bronze/Blood	6/15	Productive
Preferred as Green Plums				
Bruce	Not	Orange-red/Yellow	5/31	Reliable
Six Weeks	Not	Red/Yellow-red	5/25	
Robusto	Not	Bright red/Red	6/05	Productive
Segundo	Not	Yellow-red/Yellow-red	6/11	Productive

\* Though self-fertile, the provision of a different variety in the garden will improve pollination and production. Conditions that are not harmful to bees improve reproduction.



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