

Urban Harvest
Gardening for good.

Nectarine X Plum Hybrids

Category:	Temperate; deciduous
Hardiness:	Withstands normal freezes
Fruit Family:	Stone fruit
Light:	Full sun
Size:	15' –20'H x 15'-20'W average, may be pruned to desired HxW
Soil:	Well-drained, will not tolerate standing water
Planting:	Plant during dormancy in Jan – Feb

Nectarine X Plum hybrids (Necta-Plums) are growing in popularity. There are several varieties available in the market. They are self-fruitful but can benefit from cross-pollination with a pollinizer of either variety.

Care of Nectarine-Plum Trees

Planting: Select a planting area that is well-drained or create a raised planting bed. Remove all vegetation within a minimum three-foot diameter circle.

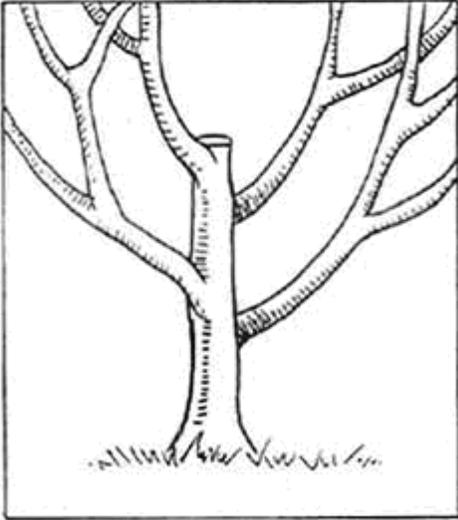
Locate the root flare; the point where the trunk transitions to the roots. Remove any nursery soil above this point, making sure the roots are still covered. Trim any roots that appear to be circling the root ball and any broken or clearly dead roots. Measure the depth of the resulting root ball.

Dig a hole that is wide and deep enough to easily accommodate the root ball. The sides of the hole should be tapered outward, not straight down (visualize a wok, not a stock pot) with the widest point at the top of the hole. The deepest point of the hole should be no deeper than your measurement of the root ball. This will allow the root flare to sit at the soil level and insures that the graft scar (located several inches about the root flare) will always be several inches above the soil level.

Place the root ball in the prepared hole. Check for straightness. Position the lowest branch you have decided to keep facing southwest. Backfill $\frac{1}{2}$ of the depth with existing soil – no amendments should be added during planting. Water well and allow it to drain. Fill the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ of the depth. Tamp the soil, but do not pack hard. Water in well and water every day for a few days unless it rains. A mulch of composted native mulch or rotted leaves is highly recommended. Do not use bark mulch.



Pruning: Necta-Plum trees need to be pruned to get sunlight onto all branches. Develop a modified central-leader scaffold with upward-sloping limbs 45° to 60° from horizontal, well-spaced around the trunk horizontally and vertically. This builds a strong infrastructure for holding the fruit and helps give



sunlight access to lower limbs. Remove crossing branches and remove or head back interior branches that go up vertically from the scaffold to increase light penetration. Fruit trees will produce little if any fruit on branches growing downward. These downward hangers should be removed.

Necta-Plums fruit on last year's new wood. Therefore, after the spring harvest, look carefully at the branches and thin those that are not producing lots of new wood back to a vigorous side branch.

As your tree gets taller, it may get too tall to pick or prune. To prevent this, thin the leading stalk (the trunk) back to a weak upward angled side branch each winter, and thin all other branches back to at least a foot below this side branch. Necta-

Plums may also be pruned to the "open vase" method.

Production: Necta-Plums will produce their first fruits in their 2nd or 3rd year from planting. The first crops will be very light, but will increase with maturity. Thin fruits when they are about ¾" to 1" diameter, leaving 4" – 6" between fruits.

Watering: All fruit trees should get consistent water in the first few years. Watering can come from rain or a hose. During the first year, if the soil under the mulch is dry, provide the tree with about 7 gallons of water per week, preferably once a week. Water slowly. This can be a little more than 3 minutes with a ½" hose and 1 ½ minutes with a 5/8" hose. Remember to account for rainfall when determining how much to water with a hose.

Fertilizing: We recommend an organic program for fruit trees in the home landscape. For a small number of trees, use a slow release organic fertilizer, available at local independent nurseries. If you have a large number of trees, or a small number of trees and a limited budget, you can use cottonseed meal, available at nurseries and feed stores. Fertilizers should be broadcast under the entire canopy space of the tree. An organic mulch of compost and native mulch, or well-rotted leaves should be maintained at all times as part of your nutrition program.

Slow release organic fertilizer: 1st year – ½ cup; 2nd & 3rd years – 3 pounds; subsequent years - 20 to 40 pounds per 1000 square feet. Apply every 3 – 4 months.

Cottonseed meal: 1st year – 1.5 cups; 2nd year – 3 cups; 3rd year – 6 cups; mature trees – 3 to 6 quarts per inch of trunk measured at the base. Apply in February and May.

Harvesting: Ripe Necta-Plums will vary in color depending on the variety. Necta-Plums do not continue ripening once they are harvested. Do not rush this process.

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Begin testing for ripeness when there is less than 25% greenish tint to the skin. Cradle the fruit in your hand. Gently press the flat of your thumb near the stem end of the fruit. If it yields slightly to your gentle pressure it is probably ripe. Be careful not to bruise the fruit while testing. Lift the fruit and twist gently on the fruit stem. If it is truly ripe, it will separate easily. If it resists, it is not quite ripe. Try again in a day or two. Necta-Plums will not all ripen at once and should be harvested daily.

Pests: Necta-Plum fruit can be infested with Plum Curculio. Check for a small half-moon cut on the fruit. Pull off those fruits and discard them. An organic method to protect from Plum Curculio is to spray with Surround® WP, a non-toxic, wettable powder that is sprayed on when the fruit is very small. It coats the fruit and prevents Plum Curculio from getting in.

Winter Protection: Winter protection is not necessary for Necta-plums. In fact, they need to acquire a specific number of chill hours in order to break dormancy and produce blooms & fruit. If the tree has open blooms in late winter/early spring, and temperatures are predicted to fall below 26° F, you may cover the tree with a cloth “tent”. It is not necessary to wrap the tree. Just drape the cloth to prevent frost from settling directly on the blossoms. Use clothespins or twine to secure the tent to the branch tips. Remove immediately after the danger has passed.



Varieties of Necta-Plums for the 2020 Sale

Spice Zee NectaPlum

Varieties of Necta-Plums for the Southeast Texas Climate

Spice Zee Nectaplum: White fleshed, nectarine-plum cross. Skin is dark maroon at fruit set, and turns pale pink when ripe. Fully ripe, the fruit is unparalleled in flavor, and both nectarine and plum traits are easily detectable. Tree is quite ornamental with purplish-pink bloom in the spring. The new leaves are red and mature into lush green in late summer. Self-fruitful. **200-300 chill hours**