

Pears In North Dakota

Pears are delicious but are not always plant-and-forget trees.

- Many varieties are not hardy in North Dakota.
- They grow quite vertically and may require pruning fortitude.
- They are susceptible to fire blight.
- The fruit attachment is brittle, possibly causing early fruit drop in windy conditions.



The main thing to know about pear trees is that they are not apple trees. Bare root trees have more of a “carrot” root and need to have deeper holes to accommodate this. Use 3 stakes and loose, padded rope guides to help establish the tree for several years in windy conditions.



Do not prune them, or prune them as little as possible when they are young. Shape the tree with wooden spacers instead, to attain main branches with 45° crotch-angles. Pear trees are very vigorous and put up multiple vertical water-sprouts in response to pruning. When they begin to bear fruit, they should respond to pruning better.

Often pears need to be picked from the tree to ripen properly. The typical proper time is when the fruit begins to turn from dark green to light green and the lenticels turn brown on the skin. Then the harvested fruit is held in a refrigerator for some time before the fruit is brought out to room temperature to soften into its final juicy form. Often, we need to experiment to determine the best method for each variety.

Successful Pears at CREC

1. **Nova** – Pick at light green and refrigerate before room temperature ripening. Juicy, tender, delicious fruit.
2. **Patten** – Late. Pick at light yellow and refrigerate. Eat. Spoils at room temperature. Or, pick greener and let ripen in cold storage. A crispy pear at CREC.
3. **Stacey** – Uncertain. Ripens early, apx. August 20-30 and we have missed it. Some sun scald on trunk: paint. Pick before ripe and ripen in cold storage.

Unsuccessful Pears at CREC

1. **Ayers** – Not hardy at CREC. Injury one year, then total death the next year.
2. **Ely** – Fruit is tannic, hard and very small. Ripens in ‘October’.
3. **Schroeder Hardy ND** – the wrong wood may have been used for grafting. Ours taste bad. Very precocious. See: ‘Vitko’ pear which tastes bad!

Possible Pears for North Dakota (*lists provided by Greg Krieger, fruit aficionado*)

- A. **Douglas** – “Flower buds hardy to at least -34°F”. Very sweet. Good keeper.
- B. **Early Gold** - similar to Ure, but ripens 10 days earlier
- C. **Golden Spice*** – harvest early and store cool for a month to develop spiciness
- D. **Hudar** – very slow to begin fruiting, but very high quality
- E. **Jubilee** – the small, round, somewhat tart fruit is good for canning, but its best use may be for perry
- F. **Loving** – a *Ussuriensis* cultivar with excellent fruit quality
- G. **Luscious** – rated as Zone 4 by some sources but is doing well at Galesburg, Jamestown and Beulah. Excellent quality fruit.
- H. **Summercrisp*** – pick and eat in August while green – crunchy and sweet. Can store two months in cold storage. Supposedly can be eaten ripe but mine are brown in the center and taste awful once they turn yellow.
- I. **Ure*** – very short window of ripeness. Very good for dehydrating – can begin processing slightly before they are ripe enough for eating

* *Many confirmations of hardiness in ND*

Probably Not Hardy in North Dakota

- J. **Gem** – probably not hardy in Zone 3
- K. **Gourmet** – probably not hardy in Zone 3
- L. **Parker** – probably not hardy in Zone 3
- M. **Ste-Sophie** – Zone 3. One of Claude Joliceour’s three favorites.
- N. **Harrow Delight** – One of Claude Joliceour’s three favorites. Probably not hardy Zone 3.
- O. **Sodak** – are there any to be found today? *N.E. Hansen, Brookings SD. Pamphlet 32, 1945.*
- P. **Kaspar’s Winter Pear** – Not doing well
- Q. **Ubileen** – “Flower buds not hardy below about -25°F”

POSSIBLE Pears to Try in North Dakota – *New Russian pears at St. Lawrence Nursery*

- R. **Krasnobokaya**
- S. **Larinskaya**
- T. **Severianka**
- U. **Vekovaya**

A Good Source: *SLN has a rotating list of hardy pears available each year. Not all are as hardy as listed – try at your site. They sell out early! Make plans for next year.*

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