

Almonds

Because almonds bloom almost a full month before peaches, they will succumb to spring frosts where winters are slow to make way for warmer temperatures. As a result, most are grown in California. Almonds are, by and large, not self-pollinating, which means companion trees should be planted nearby.

Planting

A well-drained soil on the sandy side is practically a must for successful almond culture. Wet, soggy roots will lead to declining yields and, ultimately, a failing tree. Because lingering frosts are a constant hazard, place the tree on higher ground or in a protected area. Nut trees generally have a sizable taproot, which makes them slightly more difficult to transplant than shallow-rooted trees. Dig a large hole, making sure it is deep enough to accommodate the taproot. Then fill the planting hole with soil, taking care to firm soil around roots.

Care and feeding

Immediately after planting, head back tree, but leave three or four healthy branches growing at wide angles. Once the tree is established, pruning will consist mainly of removing old wood or inwardly growing branches. As for fertilizer, the almond can get along nicely on the nutrients naturally present in the soil. An occasional dose of a well-rotted manure, though, will contribute to good growth.

Harvesting

In late fall, the hardened husks will drop easily to the ground when the branches are gently shaken. Remove kernels from inner shells and allow to dry before using in your favorite recipes.