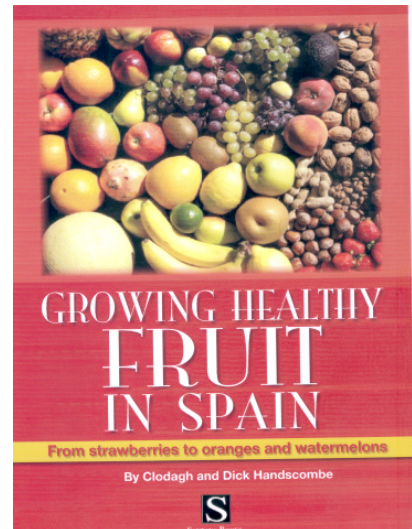


Gardening in Spain

Fruits grow well in Spanish gardens

By Clodagh and Dick Handscombe active gardeners with a colourful garden that also provides a high degree of self sufficiency including the harvesting of fruit on most days of the year. To help you do the same they wrote the book ' Growing Healthy Fruit in Spain - From strawberries to oranges and water melons'.



Why bother?

There are several very good reasons why you should.

1. Many coastal and inland orchard areas have been and are still being abandoned and the importation of fruit is on the increase - even for citrus fruits from China!
2. Most commercial fruit is picked before it is fully ripe to ensure that it is not damaged during packaging, transportation and on display in sales outlets.
3. Some fruits, including oranges, lemons, apples and pears are treated with chemical fungicides, and waxes to increase their storage and shelf life.
4. If you grow your own you can harvest them when at there very best for eating, storing or processing into jams, chutneys and drinks.
5. By growing them ecologically and organically you know that the fruit is not tainted by chemical insecticides, fungicides, waxes or skin hardeners.
6. There are a large number of fruits that grow well in Spain provided you select those suited to the microclimate of your garden. We describe some seventy including the subtropical fruits best suited for a hot coastal garden and the more temperate fruits most likely to do well in frosty inland situations in 'Grow healthy fruit in Spain - From strawberries to oranges and water melons'.
7. It does not require many trees to be able to harvest fresh fruit daily 365 days a year as illustrated below.

Fruit	Typical harvest times
Lemon - lunar	All year round
Oranges - Combination of early, mid and late season varieties.	November -May
Mandarins - as above	October-June
Raspberries	May -December
Strawberries	December- July
Apricots	June
Almonds	August -September

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Grapes	August - October
Mangos	August - September
Peaches - early plus late varieties	June - September
Pears	August - September
Persimmons	October - January
Olives	November - January
Bananas	September - March

8. Children and grandchildren can be involved - as with growing vegetables - to introduce them to a diversity of fruits, stimulate an enjoyment of fruits and fresh fruit juices and stimulate an interest in gardening. Our interest in gardening began when only five years old helping parents and grandparents with growing and harvesting crops.
9. Fruit trees are among the most useful ornamental trees for Spanish gardens for their blossom, bright coloured hanging fruits and if evergreens for their dense all year round foliage. Already in February our almond and peach tree had flowered and in sheltered spots oranges were already in flower - some still with late fruit still on the trees - and of course the perpetual lunar lemon never misses a month without flowers.
10. It's not difficult or very time consuming on a small scale.

Is it feasible on a mini-scale?

The answer is undoubtedly yes as many fruits can be grown in containers on an apartment terrace or in a town house patio garden. This can range from a terracotta or plastic strawberry barrel to a grape, kiwi or passion fruit vine growing in a container and being trained on a wall along a veranda or over a gazebo and to dwarf orange, lemon, peach, pomegranates and kumquat trees in containers. Part Two of our fruit growing book explains how to do so in small gardens and our new book out next month 'Mediterranean Apartment Gardening' describes how ten fruits can be grown on a six metre apartment terrace.

How can I make the best of fruit trees in my garden or orchard?

All the 60 types of fruit trees described in our book can be grown in gardens trained on walls, mixed into shrub beds, in the centre of terraces or lawns, around the vegetable plot to give shelter from winds or as a dedicated orchard area. However do ensure that you plant, prune, water, feed and spray them at the appropriate times of the year.

When spraying use ecological/organic sprays to ensure that the skins of fruit are not tainted by residual chemicals. Even the skins can then be safely eaten fresh or dried and used in cooking. 'Growing Healthy Fruit in Spain' describes what sprays

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and powders we use and where proprietary products can be obtained if not available in your local garden centre or horticultural shop.

However the best way of improving the chance of having healthy trees is to buy trees that show no sign of physical damage or disease and to improve/enrich the soil before planting them. The old Spanish motto 'feed the soil and not the plant' is as true for young fruit trees as for vegetables. Many citrus trees never grow well in gardens because their delicate roots were burned within a few months of planting by the overzealous use of strong chemical fertilizers.

What do I do if I drown in fruit?

Inevitably it's impossible to immediately eat all the fruit off even a few highly productive trees when first harvested. But luckily there are many things that can be done with fruits including bottling, jams, chutneys, freezing and drying. Doing the latter in the sun is not always easy but small easy to use electric fan tray driers are now sold in Spain by Conasi including the two we use. Contact info@conasi.biz asking for a data sheet and price list. We no longer buy dried fruit and nuts when going walking for a day or week. We now carry a few bags of assorted home grown home dried fruits, nuts and vegetables free of additives, added sugar or preservatives. Likewise Clodagh takes them to tennis. Others are used out of season in a variety of fruit and nut based fish and meat dishes.

The way ahead? Economic healthy gastronomy!!

By growing your own organic fruit gastronomy begins with eating ripe juicy fruit directly from a tree, bush or plant while working or strolling round the garden and fruit can be incorporated in every meal in salads, cooked dishes, deserts and refreshing drinks. You will eat better and more for less money than shopping in the local supermarket.

*Growing Healthy Fruit in Spain' along with 'Your garden in Spain' and 'Growing healthy vegetables in Spain' are obtainable from bookshops including Bookworld, and Carrefour or if more convenient direct from the publishers on 952-485838 or via Bookworld and Santana internet bookshops.

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