

Kiwi Planting and Care

Kiwi Culture

Kiwi vines grow similarly to grape vines, but more rapidly. Most varieties need well-drained soil in a sunny, wind-protected location, except Arctic Beauty Kiwi, which likes some shade.

Planting: Kiwis are vigorous vines that spread up to 30 feet. They cannot support their own weight, so they require a very sturdy support such as a trellis, arbor or espalier. Plant vines 10 feet apart and train them to grow in opposite directions on their support so they don't choke each other.

For accelerated growth, plant each kiwi vine in a hole dug 3 feet deep and wide. Fill the bottom half of the hole with composted manure and the top half with a 50-50 mix of garden soil and composted manure. Put a handful of bone meal directly below the vine's roots. The compost helps warm the soil around the roots, which Kiwis love!

Watering: Because Kiwi vines have shallow roots, summer watering is crucial. Water thoroughly twice a week (or more, if your soil is especially fast-draining) but don't over-water, leaving puddles behind. If you notice your Kiwi's leaves drooping, perform remedial watering ASAP! If you allow the leaves to droop frequently, or for more than two days at a time, you will probably lose the plant.

Fertilizing: Feed Kiwis with composted manure or a 10-10-10 fertilizer four times a year: In winter after dormancy, in spring during bud-break, right before blossoming, and after fruit set in early July.

Fruit Yield: Kiwi vines can live for 50 years or more, but they generally take 2-5 years to produce their first fruit. Fruit yield per mature plant varies by type. Fuzzy Kiwi 'Hayward' yields 25-100 lbs per plant, while Hardy Kiwis yield 50-100 lbs per plant.

Pollination: Kiwis have separate male and female plants (with the exception of a few self-fertile cultivars), so it's essential that you plant male vines (which don't produce fruit themselves) to allow for pollination and fruiting on the female vines. The general rule is to plant the same species of male and female vines, one male for every 6-10 females. Self-fertile cultivars can go solo.

“Fuzzy” Kiwi (*Actinidia deliciosa*)

This species includes the variety that is found in most grocery stores. However, this species is not extremely hardy, and may suffer cold injury some winters in the Pacific Northwest.

'Hayward': This is the Kiwi usually found in stores. Its large, fuzzy, brown fruit with sweet, lime-green flesh has made it popular. Fruit usually ripens in early-to-mid October. Vines grow vigorously, but new shoots are sensitive to injury from spring frosts. Hayward is only recommended for areas with consistently mild winters.

'Bruno': Produces a large cylindrical fruit that has darker brown skin than Hayward does. Bruno has a lower winter chilling requirement, so may be more sensitive to late winter cold spells, especially following a warm period.

'Blake': This type is supposedly “self-fertile,” but it does benefit from cross-pollination. Fruit are smaller, and more oval-shaped, than Hayward or Saanichton. Fruit ripens around the first of October.

'Vincent': Medium-size, fuzzy fruit that has better flavor if thinned at bloom time. Usually grown in southern California because of its low chilling requirement (100 hours).

Male Fuzzy Kiwi: Required for pollination. Will pollinate up to six female Fuzzy or Hardy Kiwi plants.

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Hardy Kiwi (*Actinidia arguta*)

For the home gardener, Hardy Kiwi and Arctic Beauty Kiwi (*A. kolomikta*), can mean fruit without the fear of winter loss. Hardy Kiwi earns its nickname by being hardy to -10 to -25 degrees F. Spring frost damage to young shoots is still possible.

Female Hardy Kiwi: The beautiful and vigorous Hardy Kiwi vines produce clusters of oblong fruit that are quite different from Fuzzy Kiwi. Hardy Kiwi have fruit the size of large grapes with smooth, edible skins (although some people claim they eat the skin of the Fuzzy Kiwi, most people peel it off). Hardy Kiwi have excellent flavor and aroma, especially when the fruit are ripened on the vine.

'Issai': Self-fertile. This hardy cultivar from Japan has fruit that are smaller in size, somewhat cylindrical, and fully green in color. Very good flavor and aroma. Fruit grows in grape-like clusters. Fruit ripens in early September. Moderately vigorous vines are hardy to 0 to -10 degrees F. Although it is self fertile, Issai produces larger fruit with seeds when it is cross-pollinated.

Male Hardy Kiwi: Required for pollination. Will pollinate up to eight female Hardy or Fuzzy Kiwi plants.

Arctic Beauty Kiwi (*Actinidia kolomikita*)

Also a good choice for our climate, Arctic Beauty Kiwi are hardy to -40 degrees F., but new shoots are still sensitive to spring frost damage.

Female Arctic Beauty Kiwi: The cultivars of Arctic Beauty kiwi differ greatly in fruit shape, size, color and flavor. Fruit is generally smaller than those of the hardy kiwi, but very sweet, with good aroma and flavor (especially when ripened on the vine). You can pop the fruit directly from the vine into your mouth! Although all Kiwi are a good source of Vitamin C, Arctic Beauty Kiwi excel in this area: 10 times more Vitamin C than Hayward kiwi and 20 times more than citrus fruit. Some female Arctic Beauty Kiwi now have attractive, variegated foliage, but they are outshone by the male Arctic Beauty.

Male Arctic Beauty Kiwi: Required for pollination. Will only pollinate the female Arctic Beauty Kiwi, because she does not have the same bloom time as her cousins Fuzzy and Hardy. With its gorgeous variegated pink leaves, **the male Arctic Beauty Kiwi makes an excellent ornamental vine.**

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