



Growing Edible Arizona Forests, An Illustrated Guide

Excerpt from *leafnetworkaz.org*

Edible Tree Guide

LEARN Values, Characteristics of Edible Trees

- Tree Life Span

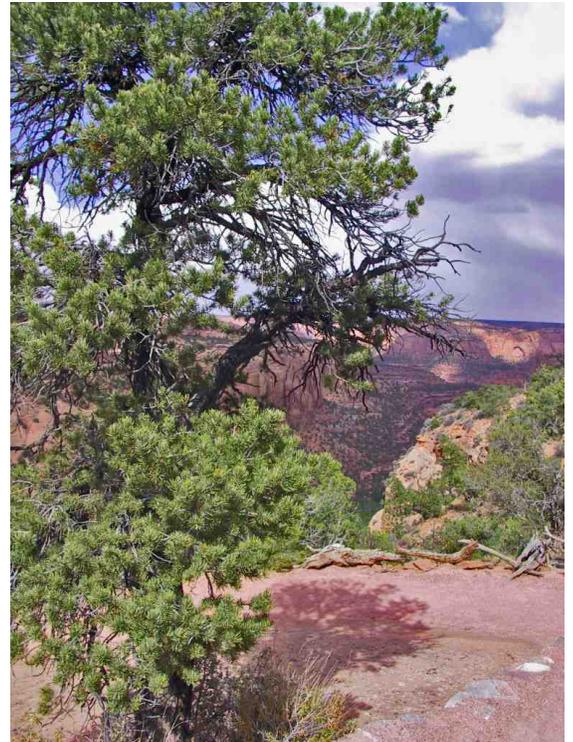
Linking Edible Arizona Forests

Tree Life Span

Trees can reach a range of ages depending on their species, whether they are native or nonnative, environmental conditions and human care. Some trees live longer than those who plant them, so plan ahead for long-term watering and maintenance of your trees. Record useful information such as planting date, tree variety, water needs, fertilizing frequency, pruning instructions and harvest times to help future tree stewards sustain healthy, productive trees. Make a map of your orchard or backyard space to share with your children and others who may care for trees in the future.

Some edible trees might need to be replaced sooner than others, so consider how you will access different trees—even in the design phase. Temperate fruit trees such as peaches, almonds and plums have a productive life of 15-20 years, while olive and pear trees can yield harvests for several hundred years. See the table of **Average Life Spans for Selected Edible Trees**, and additional information at the **Arizona Edible Tree Directory** at *leafnetworkaz.org*. Native juniper, pinyon pine, mesquite and ironwood may live for hundreds of year if environmental conditions are right. Some very long-lived junipers live thousands of years.

In planning your edible orchard, take into account that dwarf and semi-dwarf trees—available for most fruit types—usually have shorter life spans than standard varieties. For instance, standard apple and pear trees can easily live for over 50 years, whereas dwarf and semi-dwarf trees may only live for 15-25 years. Dwarf and semi-dwarf trees tend to reach bearing age sooner, which can benefit the home gardener, but they will also reach the end of their productive life sooner.



Pinyon pine trees can live for hundreds of years.

AVERAGE LIFE SPANS FOR SELECTED EDIBLE TREES, IN YEARS

Edible Tree	Lifespan	Edible Tree	Lifespan
almond	40-50	mesquite	Long-lived
apple	50-150	mulberry	300
apricot	25-40	oak	Long-lived
carob	100+	olive	500+
cherry	15-30+	palo verde	Long-lived
cherry, wild black	200+	peach/nectarine	15-20
citrus	50+	pear, Asian pear	150+
date palm	150	pecan	200+
elderberry	60	persimmon	50-75
fig	30-40+	pinyon pine	Long-lived
guava	30-40+	pistachio	150+
hackberry, netleaf	100-200	plum, cultivated	15-30+
ironwood	1500	pomegranate	30+
jujube	100+	quince	30-50
juniper	Long-lived	sapote: white/yellow	100+
loquat	100+	walnut	60+ years

Climate, soil conditions, site limitations and maintenance practices all effect how long a tree lives. Environmental stresses such as extreme hot or cold temperatures, drought, bacteria, viruses, insect infestations, and wildlife predation can severely damage or weaken trees. Good tree care, including pruning dead and diseased wood, regularly irrigating medium and high water-use trees, amending soils, treating disease and insect infestations making sure trees have plenty of light and protecting trees from extreme conditions and wildlife predation can support healthy, long-lived trees that produce bountiful harvests. See the **Arizona Edible Tree Directory** at leafnetworkaz.org and **Edible Tree Profiles** linked to the Directory for species-specific needs for your trees.

Bearing Age

Just as different edible trees live to varying ages, they also begin to bear fruit at different ages. Consider this in your goals and planning. The average years until standard-sized trees start bearing are shown in the table to the right. This assumes trees are purchased as 1 to 2-year old grafted trees. Years until bearing begins counting after the trees have been transplanted into your yard or orchard. In general, trees planted from seeds will take *longer* to reach bearing age. Dwarf and semi-dwarf trees will produce *sooner* than standard-sized trees. The **Edible Tree Directory** at leafnetworkaz.org provides bearing information for edible trees.



Tending a tree to promote good health and abundant fruit bearing.

YEARS UNTIL SELECTED EDIBLE TREES BEAR FRUIT

Edible Tree	Years to Bearing	Edible Tree	Years to Bearing
almond	2-4	olive	2-3
apple	2-5	peach & nectarine	2-4
apricot	2-5	pear, Asian pear	4-6
carob	6-7	pecan	4-8
cherry	3-7	persimmon	3-4
citrus	1-2	pistachio	5-7
fig	2-4	plum	3-6
guava	2-4	pomegranate	4
jujube	3	quince	3-5
loquat	2-3	sapote, white & yellow	3-4
mulberry	2-3	walnut	4-5