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5728 West State Street

853-4000

Care Guidelines

Hardy Kiwi

Actinidia arguta is a cold hardy variety of kiwi that is reported to survive temperatures of -25 degrees F. This is the species that has been purchased and planted by many backyard fruit growers. Fruit size is about the size of a large sweet cherry. The skin is smooth and consumed with the fruit. Fruit are greenish-yellow in color and acidic until ripe. When ripe, they are very sweet and juicy and the flavor is considered to be better than that of the kiwifruit.

Planting & Fertilizing

Plant vines 10' apart in well-drained, fertile soil. At planting time and again at the end of the growing season fertilize with a product like Miracle-Gro. Begin in the second year to fertilize twice per year with a gallon of solution per vine -- once in early spring when the plants are dormant and then just after bloom in early June. Apply 1 lb of 10-10-10 in the spring and 0.75 lb after bloom the second year. In the third and future years, apply 2 lbs. in the spring and 1 lb. after bloom. Distribute the fertilizer well over the entire root system to avoid root injury.

Pollination

Male and female flowers which open in late May are produced on separate plants so both are required for pollination, except in the case of *Issai* Hardy Kiwi which is self pollinating. One male will serve as pollinator for 8 females when planted within 100' of each other.

Pruning

Once established, a kiwi vine must be pruned throughout its lifetime to maintain form, size, and maximize fruit production. Both summer and winter (dormant) pruning are necessary. In summer remove suckers growing from the base when they are just a few inches long. Throughout the growing season thin out non-fruiting branches to reduce dense shading of the fruit.

Pruning Male Plants

Since male plants do not produce fruit they can be particularly vigorous. These plants are pruned immediately after flowering and the flowering shoots are cut back to vigorous new growth closer to the leader. Male plants are not pruned during the dormant season so that maximum flowering is achieved.

Harvesting

Hardy Kiwi, which usually begin bearing the second or third growing season, are fuzzless. They can be popped into the mouth and eaten whole. To test for ripeness pick a fruit, allow it to soften for a few days, then try it for flavor. Harvest usually takes place in late September and the fruit are picked before they are ripe. Fruit taste better when picked, refrigerated, and ripened as opposed to ripened on the vine.