



Cherry Fruit Fly

Backyard Cherry Trees

What Every Homeowner Must Know

Most homeowners do not realize that planting a cherry tree carries with it quite a bit of responsibility.

In what way am I responsible for my cherry tree?

Local ordinances (laws) specify that YOU, the owner, are responsible for controlling destructive pests of fruit trees on your property. This is true whether you plant the tree yourself, or buy property with fruit trees already on it. Although ordinances apply to all types of fruit trees, cherry trees present one of the worst problems.

What harm can my cherry tree do to anyone?

Your cherry tree can harbor insects and diseases. If not properly controlled, these pests can fly or be blown into a neighbor's backyard tree or to nearby commercial orchards where they can cause a serious economic loss.

What are some pests of cherries?

Many pests and diseases attack cherry trees, but the only one the homeowner should be concerned with is the CHERRY FRUIT FLY. This fly deposits its eggs directly into the developing cherry fruit; the result is a maggot (an immature stage of the fly) in the fruit at harvest.

Why is the cherry fruit fly so harmful?

One reason is that no one wants to eat fruit with maggots in it! The *other reason* involves

the strict regulations surrounding the sale and the export of commercially grown cherries. Fruit in warehouses is inspected rigorously to ensure maggot-free fruit. A commercial cherry grower's fruit in which a cherry fruit fly maggot is discovered will be dumped. The rest of that grower's fruit will be denied entry into the warehouse. In many cases, growers who have a fruit fly maggot found in their fruit would be eliminated from the warehouse and refused entry into other warehouses in the future. If one fruit fly maggot is found inside the warehouse, all of the growers in that warehouse could be expelled from the California market for 5 days. If another fruit fly maggot is found, the warehouse could be expelled from the market for the remainder of the season. If one fruit fly maggot is found the next season, the entire warehouse will be expelled from that market for the season. With as many as 200 growers belonging to larger warehouses, the economic impact of market expulsion from a state such as California (a major consumer of Washington's cherry crop) would be very serious to the growers, the warehouses, and the community.

What must I do to control cherry fruit fly?

The only sure way to control cherry fruit fly on your backyard tree is to spray with insecticides. Normally, you would have to apply 4-5 sprays

for cherry fruit fly before harvest, and 1-2 sprays after harvest (if all the fruit is not picked). Remember, a full-grown cherry tree may be 20-30 feet tall! It takes special equipment to spray a tree of this size. When it is small, it can be covered with a hand sprayer available at nurseries or garden supply stores, but larger trees require high-pressure sprayers. For larger trees, you can have a spray service provide pest management.

What might happen if I don't control cherry fruit fly?

If a commercial grower suspects that your tree is infested with cherry fruit fly, that grower can lodge a complaint with the local horticultural pest and disease boards. These boards are responsible for handling complaints and eliminating infestations. A board representative will contact you about your tree.

If you are not controlling cherry fruit fly, the representative will give you instructions on how to do so, and will follow up to make sure that you have complied. If you still do nothing, the board will have a commercial pesticide applicator come in and spray the tree, and charge you for it. If you refuse to pay the bill, a lien will be placed against your property taxes to ensure payment.

What should I do if I already have a cherry tree on my property, and have not been spraying for cherry fruit fly?

You have two options. The first option is to start spraying on a regular schedule for cherry fruit fly. You can obtain information on pesticides and the timing of sprays to control this pest from your local Washington State University Extension office at 328 West Poplar in Walla Walla, (509) 524-2685. The second option is to cut the tree down and buy your cherries from local fruit stands or grocery stores. Think carefully about the cost of buying fruit versus the cost of 5-7 pesticide sprays every year plus the time and effort it takes to put them on.

What should I consider before I plant a backyard cherry tree?

Decide whether you want to accept all the responsibility for taking care of the tree every year. Are you ready to do the pruning, spraying, and harvesting? Are you willing to buy special spray equipment or to have a commercial pesticide applicator spray several times per season? Are you prepared to manage pests or have the tree removed? Do you eat enough cherries during the year to make having a cherry tree worthwhile?

Tree fruits are an important industry in Washington. We take pride in the quality of the fruit that we grow. Be a good neighbor and manage cherry fruit fly. Otherwise do not plant a cherry tree. If there is a cherry tree already on your property and you cannot maintain it, please cut it down.

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WALLA WALLA COUNTY BULLETIN 106
Revised May 2005

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