

## How to care for a fruit tree in a water-wise container planter



### How to Water

Pour water down the PVC pipe until water overflows from pipe, filling the 5 gallon bucket and wetting the towel the roots are sitting on.

Also, water soil around tree until water comes out holes at bottom of the barrel.

If water is not coming out of the bottom, make sure the holes are not clogged. Water that sits in a container due to poor drainage builds harmful bacteria that can kill the tree.

### When to water

You need to be careful not to overwater fruit trees grown in containers so don't water until the soil at the top of the barrel feels dry.

The best way to know when your tree needs water is by feeling how wet the soil in the container is. Stick your finger about an inch or two into the soil (the soil sits below the mulch/wood chips) in two or three different spots. If the soil feels dry, water. If it feels wet, you do not need to water and risk overwatering your tree.

In general, Fallen Fruit's water-wise barrel planters will need to be watered about once a week under normal conditions. In the hot summer months, they will likely require water more often and in wet conditions, much less.

### Wind & Sun

You need to be careful that young, newly planted trees are not too exposed to strong winds. If your tree is losing a lot of leaves, especially on one side, it may be getting too much wind. If possible, find a way to shelter it - move it behind something that can mitigate strong gusts like a bigger tree or a wall. As the tree's roots become established, the tree will get stronger and eventually be able to stand up to the wind.

Trees with not a lot of leaves can suffer from sunburn which can kill branches. If your tree's trunk and branches are getting too much sun exposure and start to crack, like in the image below, try to find a way to shade it to keep the sun from beating down on exposed branches. Leaves protect branches from sun exposure so as the tree gets leafier sunburn becomes less of an issue.



### **Fertilization**

Be cautious with fertilizer as too much of it, or applying it when it is not needed will be harmful to your tree's health and your soil's health. The best way to minimize the need for fertilizer is by making sure your tree has at least 2" to 3" of mulch (wood chips) at all times. As the mulch breaks down, it turns into soil nutrients that feed your tree.

Fruit trees grown in containers, especially citrus, should be fertilized at least once a year. Get a fertilizer specific to citrus trees and follow the instructions on the package.

### **Pruning**

Pruning is important for container grown trees so they don't outgrow their containers. Prune a tree in a container just as you would any other tree. In general, pruning is best to do in winter months when tree is dormant although citrus can be pruned any time of the year. When ready to prune, check out our [How To Prune Fruit Trees](#) document.

### **Watch the soil level in the container**

Overtime soil breaks down and anything growing in a container will need to be re-soiled periodically and re-mulched more frequently. As you see the soil level drop, add a bag or two of

new soil to the container and top it off with mulch. If you see root exposure at the trunk of your tree, your tree is way overdue for some new soil.