

When you buy a fruit tree you actually get two trees – the rootstock and the variety grafted onto it, and both parts vary in vigour and therefore eventual tree size. While the rootstock has the biggest affect on tree size, the variety also influences how big the root system will be. This fact-sheet will hopefully clear some of the confusion (caused by nurseries' inexcusable refusal to state which rootstock is actually used). To me, a dwarf tree is less than 1.8m and a semi-dwarf is 1.8- 3.5m.

As with the stonefruits, there is confusion caused by nurseries not stating the rootstock name on the label. And once again, often where the label states 'dwarf' please read 'semi-dwarf' as some will reach 3.5m. In this fact-sheet I will try to list varieties that have dwarfing characteristics and are worth trying here.

APPLES:

There are a number of different apple rootstocks, ranging from very dwarfing to very vigorous. Some of the more dwarfing rootstocks will not grow well in hot climates and especially not on our poor soils, though they may be worth a try in the Hills or cooler parts of the southwest.

- Pinkabelle is a sport selection of Pink Lady that has a naturally compact form with less vigour than its blood-line, and on semi-dwarf rootstock can be considered a truly dwarf variety. Similar selections of other varieties such as Granny Smith (Leprechaun) are trickling onto the market.
- Gala, Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Red Fuji & Sundowner that are sold as 'dwarf' are exactly the same varieties as sold as normal trees, the only difference is the rootstock they are grafted to – my observation is they will grow to two-thirds of the normal size.

PEARS:

- Trixzee® Pipsqueek™ is a dwarf pear suitable for pots or small gardens.
- Bartlett, Beurre Bosc, Bonza, Christmas Cocktail, Corella, Hood, Josephine, Mirandino Cocktail, Packham Triumph, Pretty Face Cocktail, Seckel Cocktail, Sensation and Sunshine are sold as dwarf trees but may eventually grow to 3.5m (they are grafted to a Quince rootstock). Most are still available as 'normal' trees as well (they are grafted onto vigorous pear rootstocks).

THE CITRUS:

- The Pipsqueek™ lemon (Eureka or Meyer) a supposedly dwarf tree suitable for pots or small gardens, but because I'm cynical and it's grafted to Flying Dragon rootstock I want to see a 20yo tree!
- Lots-a-Lemons™ is a semi-dwarf strain of Meyer lemon, and seems to do well in most areas.
- Many of the so-called 'dwarf' citrus are grafted to Flying Dragon, C35 or Trifoliata rootstocks which are not dwarf at all, rather slow growing semi-dwarf – trees will grow to two-thirds the size of a 'normal' tree (virus-free Trifoliata will grow as big as any). But fortunately a couple of nurseries have seen the light and changed their labels from 'dwarf' to 'semi-dwarf'. Eureka & Meyer lemons, Emperor, Honey Murcott, Imperial & Nules mandarins are all available as semi-dwarf as well as normal trees. It's also interesting that many citrus are infected with a mild form of the Tristeza citrus dwarfing virus that will also lead to slow growth and a smaller tree, but I doubt if a nursery will tell you (or even know for that matter).

BETTER RETAILERS:

Dawsons Garden World (<http://www.dawsonsgardenworld.com.au>), mainly the Forrestfield outlet.

Tass 1 Trees (<http://www.tass1trees.com.au>), Great Northern Hwy, Baskerville.

Herbs R Us (<http://herbsrus.com.au/pages/products.php>), Wanneroo Weekend Markets.

Floraland Nursery (Mahogany Creek) and **Wandilla Garden & Gift Centre** (Wattle Grove).

Woodbridge Fruit Trees (www.woodbridgefruittrees.com.au) is a great nursery in Tasmania that has a great range of apples & pears and ship to WA (including so-called heritage or heirloom varieties).