

Pear Assessment 2014

Table 17

There is a small pool of pear varieties to choose from for the colder latitudes. The choices are particularly limited when compared to apples. There are some that do indeed thrive at our location, however, with no sign of winter injury. We have also found that the slower and less succulent growth of pears suppresses fireblight outbreak (we have never seen it on our pears in 18 years). What is reassuring when considering pears for commercial possibilities under organic management is that they are much less affected from fruit disease and insect attack as compared with apple. Our orchard is rarely attacked by fungal disease or insects. It has been reasoned that the extreme hardness of the pear flesh may deter ovipositing.

Of issue, however, is blister mite presence. All the European cultivars are susceptible and readily attacked. The Ussurian and Asian specimens are less affected in general.

We have found that in this climate, young pears have a decidedly slow rate of growth at the nursery stage. As the tree ages, this slowed growth rate changes markedly, but not as rampant as in milder growing regions.

There is also very little attack from trunk boring insects. We have found only one instance in almost 2 decades.

Early bloom has been expressed as a potential hardiness concern. However, perhaps due to the variety selections made, we have had little incidence of failure from blossom kill.

Evaluations for pears are listed on several data sheet. A full list of varieties can be found in table 1 and table 17 and recommendations can be found in tables 14 and 15. Some bloom data can be found in table 2.

An additional planting of 50 + varieties exists at our location, but the trees are too young to make any meaningful observations as to their merits.

Pears do have limitations in this climate, including fewer cultivar choices, far fewer rootstock candidates, and trickier growing at a young age. They do, however have a place in an organically managed system in the colder region if proper choices in stock are made. Although we have been disappointed with many varieties trialed here, enough have proved impressive enough to warrant pears as a good addition to the cold climate organic orchard.

Cultivar	Growth	Notes
Beurre Giffard	weak	Slow growing and small trees. Displaying signs of cold damage.
Cabot	good	Moderate growth and only occasional cold damage displayed.
Clapp's Favorite	weak	Failure to thrive due to cold intolerance. Not blighted, but very slow to grow.
Clara Fritj	fair	Slow growing to date, but appear quite hardy.
David	good	Very good form, spreading, and well angled branches. Some resistance to blister mite. Advertised as fireblight resistant, which has been our experience. Fruit can crack, especially in rainy spells following dry weather.
Garber	good	Shows good vigor, but only fair form, needing some management. No evidence of cold intolerance.
Golden Spice	fair	Somewhat weak in growth here, showing signs of cold stress and some dieback. No blight.
Hardy	good	No cold damage. A beautiful tree in form, but unfortunately a terrible form for managing for fruit..grows like a Lombardy Poplar. Very vigorous.

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Hill	good	First rate all purpose pear. Excessive vigor and upright growth make it difficult to form and manage. No fireblight. Moderately susceptible to blister mite and pear scab. Local variety
Hosni	died, cold intolerant	Not cold hardy enough for the region.
Hudar	weak	A poor grower thus far, showing cold intolerance.
Illinka	fair	Has done fairly well for an asian strain, but weaker than most here, thus far.
Krylov	good	Vigorous and healthy tree. Shows no cold damage. Form is fair.
Luscious	good	Decent form for a pear. Moderate in vigor, adding to its ease of managing. Showing good cold tolerance here. No blight. Blister mite susceptible. May have ineffective pollen.
Okolo	good	Has faired quite well in this climate, surprisingly. Shows little cold damage. Noblight.
Radchinskaia	fair	Slow growing to date, but appear quite hardy.
Shinseiki	fair	Moderate cold intolerance, but doing fairly well here. No blight.
Southworth	good	Moderate growth and only occasional cold damage displayed.
Stacey	good	Healthy tree, with acceptable form. Bearing somewhat early in life. No fireblight here.
Summercrisp	good	Displays good form, a rarity in pears. Vigorous, but not excessive. Advertised as fireblight resistant, which has been our experience. Blister mite susc.
Tait Dropmore	all specimens weak or died	Have struggled here for years, never attaining much size as a tree. Not blighted, simply growing poorly and suffering cold damage.
Ussuriensis	good	Very good form, spreading, and well angled branches. Some resistance to blister mite. Advertised as fireblight resistant, which has been our experience.
Walden Large	good	First rate all purpose pear. Excessive vigor and upright growth make it difficult to form and manage. No fireblight. Moderately susceptible to blister mite and pear scab. Local variety
Winter Nelis Seedlings	fair	Seedlings, not grafted trees. Several dozen have grown slowly, but show no cold damage. Small trees.

We are testing a pool of another 50+ pear varieties, but they are too young to make an assessment.