





# Tamarillo

(Tree Tomato – *Cyphomandra betacea*)

Type	Deciduous/ Evergreen	Height x Width (metres)	Spacing (metres)	Pollinator	Soil type	Sun	Moisture	Shelter	Plant	Harvest
	E	2–3.5 x 3	3	N				Y	Oct–Nov	Autumn– winter

## Site

- Needs a warm summer, mild winter and sheltered site.
- Very frost tender, with large, thin leaves and brittle branches that break easily. Evergreen unless frost removes the leaves in winter.
- Prefers deep, rich, well-drained soil that retains moisture during summer.
- Does not tolerate waterlogging – grow on a slope if this might be a problem.
- Fruits on new growth. Needs pruning to keep the fruiting wood near the tree's strong framework – each year, cut laterals that have fruited back to the tree's basic framework, and remove dead or diseased wood, and any suckers.
- Prune from after the last of the big frosts until as late as October. The timing of pruning determines the timing of the next season's fruit.

## Care

- A short-lived tree (5–12 years).
- Plant in October or November. Stake the tree against winds and protect from frosts in the first winter.
- Has very shallow roots – water regularly during dry periods. Doesn't tolerate competition from weeds – mulch thickly to control weeds and keep the roots cool and moist (but keep the area next to the trunk clear so it doesn't rot).
- Established trees can survive brief frosts – the leaves might fall off, but new leaves will grow again.
- A fast-growing tree. Fertilise four times per year, when the soil is wet – in early spring, after pruning, in November, and in February.
- Self-fertile. Pollinated by insects and wind.

## Training & pruning

- At planting, shorten the main stem to 1m to encourage low branching.
- When side shoots (laterals) grow, pinch them back when they're 50cm long, to create a strong framework.

## Harvest

- Bears fruit within 18 months – fruit takes 8 months from pollination to ripening.
- Ripens from April to November.
- Pick when the fruit is slightly soft and pulls off the tree easily.
- Eat fresh, add to fruit salad, or use in sauces, chutneys, savoury dishes, jams, juice and jellies. Preserve in jars, or puree the flesh and freeze (it turns brown, but is still good to eat). To remove the skins easily, cover the fruit in a bowl with boiling water for a few minutes then peel.

## Health

- High levels of vitamins A, B6, C (when eaten fresh) and E, iron and potassium, fibre.

## Plants for free

- Take 30cm cuttings from 1- or 2-year-old wood on disease-free plants.
- Cut the stem square, just below a leaf node, and remove the leaves.
- Insert the cuttings into firm soil until they've taken root, then plant in late spring.