



Burnt Ridge Nursery and Orchards

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Kiwis: Varieties and Harvest

Around 1970 kiwi fruits started appearing in grocery stores. Extracting one of the seeds and placing it in a pot, it grew vigorously as an attractive ornamental vine.

It turns out that, growing them from seed, they'll take about 10 years before the sex is known, and half, on average, will be nonfruiting males.

Nowadays, in the nursery we grow our kiwi fines from cuttings of named and sexed varieties, since one male can pollinate up to a dozen females. Growing from cuttings also shortens the bearing time by many years.

Our Arctic Beauty and Issai Hardy Kiwi vines can begin bearing a year or two after planting. Hardy kiwi and fuzzy kiwi take 3-5 years typically to begin fruiting, and can bear enormous loads of fruit at maturity - a hundred pounds of fruit annually is not uncommon, given adequate space. When given lots of space, yields of up to 450 pounds have been harvested from a single vine.

Hardy kiwis are harvested here in Western Washington in September, when still firm to the touch. If one in a hundred is soft, that is the ideal time to harvest. They are inedible at that point, which means the pards and wildlife aren't interested. A few days at room temperature will soften and sweeten them up. If refrigerated when still hard, they'll keep for months. I ate a few into mid-January.

If allowing them to soften on the vine, harvesting must be done more carefully, and they won't keep very long.

Fuzzy kiwis are harvested here after Halloween and before Thanksgiving. Letting them go as long as possible before a hard frost will ensure a greater keeping quality. Last year we were eating them into early June, from fruits kept in our crisper drawer of the fridge.

Michael Dolan