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NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

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GROWING FRUIT

Now is the time to decide whether or not to grow fruits or nuts. Consider the time, labor, logistics, and chemicals involved in producing these crops. Are you willing to do what must be done to insure production? Do you have a suitable location? Fruit, such as blackberries, figs, Japanese persimmons, and pears, are low-maintenance crops. The hardest to care for are peaches, plums, apricots, and pecans.

For maximum production, fruit plants need at least 6 hours of full sunlight daily. Extremely shaded landscapes are not ideal sites for fruit planting. Soil and drainage are also important considerations. Most fruit and nut species cannot tolerate excessive periods of 'wet feet'. Fruit trees planted in soil with poor drainage show reduced growth, pale green leaves, iron chlorosis, zinc rosette, leaf abscission, and in some extreme cases, drought stress. These symptoms occur when there is not enough oxygen available in the soil, and the plant is unable to absorb the essential nutrients necessary for growth, even though it may be standing in water.

Growing trees and shrubs on large, raised beds can improve soil drainage where the native soil is unsuitable. To evaluate soil drainage, dig a hole 32 inches deep, 8 inches in diameter, and fill it with 7 gallons of water. If it is empty within 1 hour, your site has excellent internal drainage. There is very good internal drainage if the hole is empty in 8 hours. If the hole is empty in 24 hours, there is good internal drainage. If the hole is empty in 48 hours, you have adequate soil drainage. At the end of 48 hours, if the hole still contains water, it will be extremely difficult to produce regular crops of high-quality fruits on that soil.

Peaches and plums need very good soil drainage. Apples, pears, and grapes need good soil drainage, while pecans, figs, and persimmons can survive with adequate soil drainage.

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