

apple tree-to-be™



Growing a tree from seed is a unique experience, giving you the chance to watch your tree go from seedling to majestic and decorative shade-giver:

While the seed included in your kit is from Ralls Janet apples, your tree's fruit will likely have different characteristics. Apple trees grown from seed produce fruits that may be larger or smaller than those of the parent tree, have their own distinct flavor, and may even be a different color than the apple the seed came from. In 6–10 years you will have a unique apple all your own.

Only 85% of apple trees bear fruit, yet they all provide a beautiful, habitat-building addition to your yard. Apple trees normally take 6–10 years before they begin to reproduce.

Allow your tree ample room to grow; at maturity it can grow to 80 feet high with a 20 foot spread, but careful pruning can help control the size.

Your Apple Tree-To-Be Kit includes five *Malus pumila* 'Ralls Janet' seeds, a stratification bag containing a peat wafer, growing medium, a coir seedling pot, a terra cotta plant saucer and this reference guide. An aluminum tag has been provided for you to personalize as you wish (an old ballpoint pen works great); its cardboard backing allows for easier inscription, yet will degrade to leave the aluminum tag intact. Once you tie this permanent tag onto your tree's trunk, please inspect annually to insure that the trunk has adequate room for growth.

growing an apple tree from seed | Late fall or early winter is an excellent time to plant the seeds directly outdoors. If you are going to start your seed indoors, it is important to mimic nature by first exposing your seeds to cold temperatures to improve their germination rate. This is known as stratification.

Remove peat wafer from stratification bag and rehydrate. Place all of the seeds provided into the rehydrated wafer, pushing them down into the moistened stratification medium. Place wafer and seeds into stratification bag; zip up the bag, write the contents and date on the outside of the bag, then put the bag in the bottom vegetable crisper compartment of your refrigerator for 60 days.

Inspect the seeds every week to make sure the stratification medium is lightly moist. Add water to remoisten the medium if necessary.

At the end of the 60 days, remove wafer from stratification bag, pot up in the seedling pot using your growing medium, place the pot on the saucer and set the pot in a warm place, keeping the soil moist. The seedlings will emerge in 1–2 months. Select the strongest seedling and, using scissors, snip the other seedlings off at the soil line, leaving the selected seedling to grow. (You may try and separate the seedlings once they've germinated; however, the seedlings' root systems may be damaged during transplanting.)

Keep your seedling evenly moist, allowing for adequate drainage. Feed with an all-purpose complete fertilizer. Mist leaves occasionally and make sure your tree has plenty of light.

After a few months in the seedling pot, transplant your tree into a larger container. If trees in your locale are typically active at this time place your apple tree outside in an area protected from wind and full sun. By sinking the container into the ground, the root mass will be protected from temperature extremes. Don't forget to regularly water and feed your new tree. If, however, trees in your area are dormant, overwinter your new tree indoors. A sudden change in climate can be detrimental to your tree's well being.

note | Rabbits and deer love apple seedlings, so be sure to protect the seedlings until they are strong enough to withstand the attention.

Plant it in its permanent location the following spring, allowing room to grow. Your apple tree prefers a deep, rich, slightly acidic, and well-drained soil in a mostly sunny spot. Prune for shape while the tree is dormant in winter. You can contact your local agricultural extension for tips on pruning apple trees in your area.