

# Guide to planting and tending your heirloom apple tree

Congratulations! You are now the proud caretaker of heirloom apple trees grafted by the Apple Core Project. Thank you for participating in the planting of a new generation of rare heirloom fruit trees.

Your tree came from \_\_\_\_\_.

The variety of your tree is \_\_\_\_\_. ACP ID number \_\_\_\_\_

Your tree is grafted on \_\_\_\_\_ rootstock.

There are many ways to plant and tend your apple trees. Here you will find a mix of permaculture practices, biodynamic principles and historic agricultural techniques that worked for the fruit pioneers in Colorado. You can find many print and online resources for planting and tending fruit trees. Be sure to consider your location and soil type when consulting these resources. (i.e. Amending soil with wood ashes is not recommended in our area as our soil tends to be basic and wood ashes raise the soil pH.)

## Choose a site:

Consider soil, sun, wind conditions of your site.

Apple trees like moderate soil drainage, 6-8 hours of daily sun, and some protection from wind and strong southern winter angle sun.

Your tree should be planted when soil is workable.

These trees are grafted on Malus Domestica and Antonovka rootstock.

Malus Domestica is cold hardy to zone 3 and full size. Domestica is a seedling rootstock and will be a unique apple if the graft dies or is nibbled by an animal.

Antonovka is cold hardy to zone 3 and full size. Generally speaking, they should be planted 15'- 30' apart.

## Dig a hole:

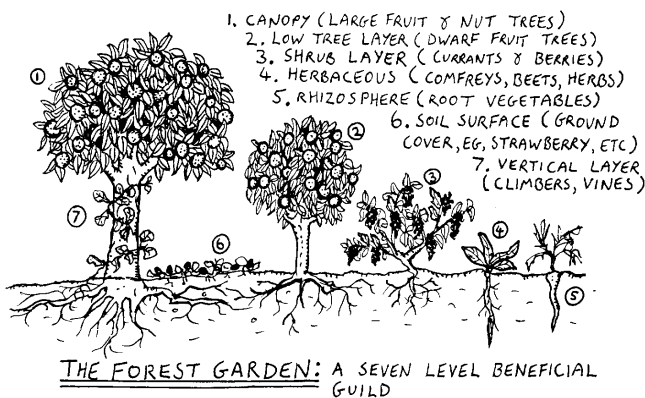
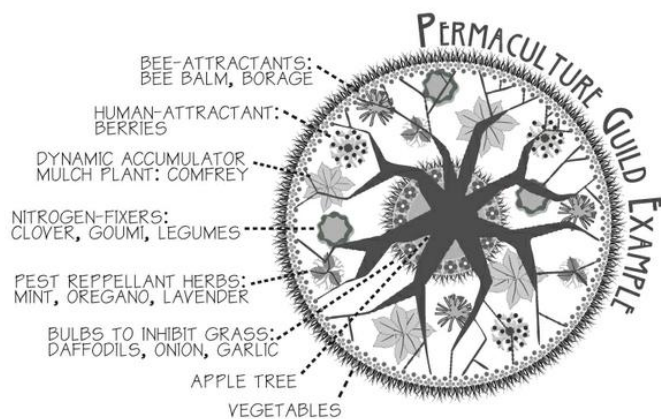
Dig a hole 3-4' wide and deep enough to cover the graft line with 6" of soil. We recommend that you bury the graft as the tree will own-root and therefore have a stronger root system. You can leave the graft exposed if you prefer.

## Plant:

Place the tree in the hole. If you choose to add compost or amendment to your soil, add no more than 20%. You may choose to add cotton burrs, or composted animal manure, or coconut coir. Many sources strongly recommend against soil amendment at the time of planting. Too much compost can burn the roots of the tree. You may choose to mulch your tree with an amendment rather than mixing it with your soil. Planting according to favorable moon cycles will encourage healthy establishment.

Fill the hole around the tree. Do not pack the soil. If your soil is clay, you may choose to place the tree in a slight mound tapering out to a slight trench encircling the tree. This serves to catch rain to efficiently water the tree. Planting on swales also efficiently uses water. Mulch the planted area with your preferred mulch or straw for water conservation.

**Plant companion plants.** These serve to attract pollinators and predatory insects. They secure nutrients for the trees, provide mulch which retains moisture, and grow more food for you to enjoy. Planting in this way reduces the need for outside inputs and makes your orchard/garden a more self-sustaining entity. Some prefer to wait 3-4 years before planting to allow the tree time to establish.



**Water:** To determine whether your tree needs water, feel the soil in the immediate area of the tree. If it is dry on the top inch or two, water. Trees prefer to be watered deeply, then to dry out before watering again. Do not fertilize your tree this year. In the coming years, you will observe the growth on the tree to determine if and what it needs in the way of fertilizer.

**Prune:** Pruning happens in the late winter, early spring before the buds begin to swell on the tree. There are many ways to prune an apple tree. You may choose not to prune it at all or very little. You can decide how you would like your tree to grow, then prune it accordingly. Prune no more than 20% of live wood on an apple tree in one year. Dead and diseased can be taken anytime. Spray your pruners with rubbing alcohol to sterilize them between cuts. Do not paint your cuts with anything. There are many online and print pruning resources. We also offer a pruning and grafting class in the spring.

**Protect your tree from sunscald:**

We recommend protecting the trunks of your young apple trees from the low angle winter sun. This could be done with a tree cone, some stakes and an old T-shirt, or diluted latex paint applied to the trunk of the tree. Paint should be diluted to 10%

paint, 90% water. Apply your shade option on the South side of the tree. Do not wrap your trees with tree wrap.

**Protect your tree from animal damage:**

We recommend placing a protective fence around your tree to prevent animal damage to the tree. If you have voles or porcupines in your location, you might consider a plastic tree guard around the base of the tree for the first several years. This will eventually need to be cut away or removed as the tree grows.



Please feel free to contact us with questions. Enjoy and thank you for contributing to the planting of a new generation of rare old apple varieties!

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