

ASIAN PEAR

Pyrus pyrifolia (Rosaceae)

Fast facts:

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| Acres in Washington: 257 Number of Growers: less than 50 |
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Description Of crop:

Asian pears are similar to apples and pears. The flavor and appearance is similar to pear, whereas the texture is crisp like an apple. Production practices for Asian pears are the same as production practices for European pears. However, European pear trees mature very slowly; Asian pears mature rapidly and are in production in just a few years. Also, consumers demand very large Asian pear; some are the size of grapefruit. However, because the trees are heavy producers, they require more vigorous thinning than European pears to produce large fruit. Asian pears are sometimes called “apple pears” due to their commonly round shape and crisp, crunchy flesh. Like apples, they are harvested when they are ready to eat. Fruits must be handled carefully to prevent skin punctures and bruising, so they are often packed in the field. The stiff stems are cut short to prevent damage to fruit in packing. Unlike apples, Asian pears will store only one to two months after harvest. If packaged properly, they can travel around the world – New Zealand Asian pears are distributed throughout the United States. Because of their comparative fragility, Asian pears are packaged in single layers in 40-pound boxes. Single layer packaging is more costly for the distributor. Probably the most promising varieties in our area include the russets: Kosui, Chojuro, Mishirasu, and Atago. Some late varieties such as Atago store well, thereby extending the marketing season. Like the European russet pears, Asian pears produce attractive, high quality fruit. Mishirasu in particular is unique, with brown russet skin, a roundish irregular shape, and very large size—some individual fruits weigh up to two pounds. If packaged appropriately, this variety could have distinctive marketplace appeal. An attractive, smaller size pack may make these pears suitable to special high-end markets. Asian pears also have good potential for organic marketing, since the major disease problem, susceptibility to bacterial infection (*Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *syringae*), can be largely avoided by selecting more resistant varieties and by pruning during the summer. Developing market awareness may present a challenge, and careful fruit handling and packing will be necessary.

Key pests:

Pests of Asian pear are similar to the pests of apples and European pears. Like European pears, Asian pears have fireblight problems. Other disease problems are powdery mildew, pear scab, and *Pseudomonas*. Asian pears are more

susceptible to both pear scab and *Pseudomonas* than European pears. Insect pests include codling moth, pear psylla, aphid species, and mites. Weed problems are the same in Asian pear as they are in other tree fruit orchards.

Key pesticides:

Streptomycin or copper fungicides are used to control *Pseudomonas*. But, streptomycin has limited success, and the effectiveness of copper fungicides is questionable. Oxytetracycline is used for fireblight control, and powdery mildew is controlled using myclobutanil, fenarimol, triadimefon and sulfur products. Dodine, a common fungicide of European pears, damages Asian pears. Section 18 exemptions for control of pear psylla are fenoxycarb at prebloom and abamectin postbloom. Azinphos-methyl is used for codling moth. Oryzalin is used for preemergence weed control, and glyphosate is used at a low rate. Grass as a cover crop controls weeds. Pesticides registered for European pears can be applied also to Asian pear, provided that the label does not specify otherwise.

Critical pest

Control issues:

Asian pear production in this country cannot compete with production in Asia, due to pesticide regulations. In countries like Japan, systemic pesticides can be applied to control insects. Systemic insecticides help prevent “unsightly” damage to pears. These insecticides, however, are not registered in the United States. Those that are registered, such as oxythioquinox for use on European pears, will mark the skin of some Asian pears. Asian pears damage easily, but consumers want a “perfect” product. Insecticides that would help produce an unblemished product are unavailable in the United States. Thus, Asian pears produced in this country are less valuable in the world market than are Asian pears produced elsewhere.

Expert contacts:

Gary A. Moulton
Scientific Asst Sr., MVREU
P.O. Box 920
WSU Mount Vernon NW REC
16650 State Route 536
Mount Vernon, WA 98273-4768
(360) 848-6131

Bryon Phillips
Tree Fruit Commissioner for WSCPR
325 Canyon Creek Dr.
Wenatchee, WA 98801
509 662 7102

Location of Production: Okanagan, Chelan, Douglas, Yakima, and Franklin counties.



Asian Pear

Asian Pear Production in Washington State



Sources:

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