

M. Richards



# FRUIT AT FILOLI

## FILOLI GARDENER'S REFERENCE

*Come late summer and early fall, Filoli's orchards and allée are brimming with many different types of fruit. Visitors often ask what happens to all of this fruit, and wonder how to get their trees to produce so generously. Few, however, realize the historic significance of the gentleman's orchard as an important original landscape feature, or Filoli's role as North America's largest private collection of fruits—including numerous rare, historically significant varieties. Such repositories are dwindling in number worldwide, and Filoli is proud to contribute to an important piece of preservation that extends well beyond our garden walls.*

### A Gentlemen's Orchard

Filoli's original owner, Mr. Bourn, took great pleasure in his fruit trees and considered himself a gentleman farmer. The ten-acre gentlemen's orchard was a defining feature of his country estate, and in 1918, when Filoli was new, the property boasted over 1,000 mixed fruit trees. The Roth family continued to maintain the original orchard through 1975 and to use its fruits—including apples, pears, plums, apricots, walnuts, figs, and quince—in the kitchen and as exhibits in county fairs. Neglected in later years as a less vital piece of the property, the orchard fell into disrepair. Three of ten acres were paved in the lower orchard, to create the lower parking lot, and at the time restoration efforts began in 1998, only 115 of the original trees survived. Through the industrious restoration efforts of numerous volunteers and Filoli garden staff, and in keeping with the garden's original composition, Filoli now hosts over 1,500 fruit trees in the orchards and formal gardens.

*Right: 1998 fly-over showing irrigation trenches dug during early orchard restoration, and scattered remaining trees of the historic gentleman's orchard. Photo by Susan Hine.*

### Historic Fruit

In preserving and maintaining this historic landscape feature, Filoli has also undertaken an important role in the preservation of historic fruit germplasm. The orchard's surviving authentic trees have been left standing, and were also propagated onto new rootstock and replanted. The lower orchard has also been planted with 670 new heritage fruit trees, which includes 47 varieties of heritage stone fruits and 141 varieties of hybrid American table grapes. In accordance with Filoli's accessions policy, the orchard is planted only with historically appropriate fruits; all varieties must have been pre-existing in California as of 1918, or up to 1975, when Filoli became a property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Unhealthy fruit varieties are removed, and selections are focused on varieties that are well adapted to our climate.



## Fruit and Community

The orchard's goal has never been commercial fruit production; the land is unfortunately poorly suited for the task, with heavy clay soil and poor drainage. Furthermore, Filoli does not have the option to spray certain pesticides within the watershed and it was decided early on to strive for organic management practices. A number of pests thrive under these conditions which can affect the size, appearance, and quality of our fruit, and which keep most of our harvest from being marketable. These include: apple maggot, codling moth, brown rot, fireblight, scab, and peach leaf curl. Raccoons and opossums also tend to ravage the harvest by knocking fruit to the ground before it is ripe.

Still, one of Filoli's missions is to share this unique resource with our members and with the community at large. Despite the setbacks, we still harvest an abundance of delicious fruit that can be enjoyed onsite and in season at the five star rated Quail's Nest Café. We also share samplings of our fruits at our harvest festival each fall with apple, pear and grape tasting, cook-off contests, and fresh pressed apple cider from a blend of varieties. Tours of the gentlemen's orchard, located east of the parking lot, are now available by reservation, and Filoli distributes bud wood to other organizations, such as the Santa Clara Valley Chapter of the California Rare Fruit Growers, Inc.

---

### References:

- Tolmach, L. (1998). The Filoli Fruit Orchard New Preservation Project. *The Sundial Times*, 17, 1-2.  
Tolmach, L. (2002). Filoli Orchard Update 2002. *The Sundial Times*, 30, 1-4.

*Young trees in Filoli's restored gentlemen's orchard, 2007.*



*Filoli Gardener's Reference sheets are created by garden staff to answer common questions regarding Filoli's traditional horticultural practices. This sheet may be accessed from the Filoli website.*

**FILOLI CENTER, 86 CAÑADA ROAD, WOODSIDE, CA 94062**  
**(650) 364-8300 WWW.FILOLI.ORG**

Filoli's gentlemen's orchard and the fruit garden currently contain 936 fruiting trees and vines, including: 410 apples, 164 pears, 44 plums, 34 peaches, 12 cherries, 2 apricots, 2 loquats, 1 nectarine, 24 quince, 15 walnuts, 11 medlars, 7 chestnuts, 6 hazelnuts, 6 mayhaws, 6 persimmons, 3 pawpaws, 2 sorbs, 1 pineapple guava, 1 mulberry, 1 fig, and 164 American table grape hybrids.

### Further Reading & Fruit Tree Maintenance Resources:

- Flores, B. J. (2000). *The Great Book of Pears*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press.  
Lurie, D. (2004). Fruit Tree Pruning Part Two: Training Young Trees. *The Sundial Times*, 36, 1-4.  
Lurie, D. (2004). Fruit Tree Pruning Part One: Principles of Tree Growth and Pruning Basics. *The Sundial Times*, 34, 1-4.  
Otto, S. (1995). *The Backyard Orchardist: A Complete Guide to Growing Fruit Trees in the Home Garden*. Maple City, MI: Ottographics.  
University of California Agriculture & Natural Resources Cooperative Extension:  
[http://ceyolo.ucdavis.edu/Gardening\\_and\\_Master\\_Gardening/Free\\_Gardening\\_Handouts.htm](http://ceyolo.ucdavis.edu/Gardening_and_Master_Gardening/Free_Gardening_Handouts.htm), and  
<http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/InOrder/Shop/Shop.asp>

Fruit tree pruning workshops are held at Filoli in January and February