



Growing Kiwifruit in Indiana

Several types of Kiwi produce fruit. The one with which we are most familiar—the fuzzy brown oblong-shaped fruit—is a variety called *Actinidia deliciosa*, which is not winter hardy in our area. However, Kiwi *Actinidia arguta* is winter hardy in Indiana. The fruit size is considerably smaller than *A. deliciosa* and is about the size of a large sweet cherry. The skin is smooth and can be eaten with the fruit. When ripe, the fruit is sweet, juicy, and flavorful. However, it does not store well.

Kiwifruit is a dioecious plant, which means it has separate male and female plants. Thus, you will need at least two plants, one male and one female, to produce fruit. Plants are susceptible to wind, cold temperatures, and late frost. A suitable site with protection and well-drained soil should be selected. Avoid planting in frost pockets. Sites with northern exposure are good because they delay early growth in spring, which can be damaged by late frosts.

Set plants 10 feet apart in mid-May, or after the danger of frost is past. Plant one male for every nine females. Plants require frequent watering from the time they are transplanted. Once established, the plants can become large and aggressive—growing up to 40 ft. in length! If not pruned and trained, the vines will grow up trees and over fences. Thus, kiwifruit require a trellis or other support structure. It is important to select one or two new canes and train them to grow vertically. Do not allow them to twist around the support pole or wire. Set trellis posts 10 feet apart. Kiwifruit trellises are usually in the shape of a T, with the cross arm about 7 ft. off the ground, and about 7 wires across the five-foot-long cross arm. Train the main cane up the pole to the height of the cross arm, then train arms along the center wire. Laterals grow from these arms and can be tied to the outside wires. (Fastening them can help keep them from breaking off, especially on windy sites.) The fruit hang down through the trellis wires where they are easy to harvest.

Plants should be fertilized, but are sensitive to fertilizer burn. Do not put fertilizer in the hole with the plants. Mix about ¼ cup of 12-12-12 into the soil at planting. Depending on the size of the plant, after the first year, apply 1-2 cups of 12-12-12 in the spring.

If you have gotten this far and your plants are doing well, you'll need to expand the care of your Kiwi plants. Dormant and summer pruning will be essential and you'll need more guidance than can be provided in this culture sheet. We recommend that you go to the Ohio State University web site (ohioline.osu.edu) and search for bulletin HYG-1426-93 for a more complete discussion on growing and caring for your kiwi plants. For an even more thorough discussion, go to the Oregon State University web site and search for bulletin PNW 507.

Good luck and happy planting!