

DID YOU KNOW...



THE DWARF SOUR CHERRY

Dwarf sour cherries originate from Middle East Asia according to 19th-century botanists. Romans mentioned it during their military campaign, after tasting them in a city called Cerasus, now Giresun in Turkey. The sour cherry that has long been cultivated locally is the Montmorency. Dwarf sour Cherry is a cross between *Prunus fruticosa* from Siberia with *Prunus Cerasus*. Further development of those hybrids started in the 1940s at the University of Saskatchewan with Dr. Les Kerr. In 1999 the first commercial variety was introduced: SK Carmine Jewel.

That dwarf sour cherry is a shrub (Maximum height of 2,5M) that can yield up to 15Kg of berries per bush. They are extremely hardy and can tolerate -40°C (Zone 2b). Berries are better in quality than the typical sour cherries, like Evans and Montmorency. They are larger in size and sweeter. Harvest period starts in July until late August, like the high-bush blueberries. The lifespan of a bush can be of 20–25 years. Those plants are auto fertile (Honeybee mainly).

DWARF SOUR CHERRY'S SELECTION AND SITE PREPERATION

Dwarf sour cherry bushes will grow in different soil types but will prefer light soil with a pH of 6 to 7. They are not very demanding in fertility and the needs for soil preparation of the raspberry plants will do just fine.

Like gooseberries, dwarf sour cherries flowers may be hurt by spring frost, so site location must be selected to minimize that risk. Bushes themselves are very hardy to winter conditions and can tolerate -40°C .



DWARF SOUR CHERRY'S PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE

Upon arrival of plants unwrapped the boxes and keep plants outside in carriage trays and make sure they don't lack watering until planting. Spaced the rows to facilitate the harvest and the machinery movements. We recommend a minimum row spacing of 4 M between the rows and 1.5 to 1.8 on the row.

Annual fertilization is recommended in the spring or early summer when the flush of growth is occurring. Do not feed them late in the summer because this will impair fruit initiation and reduce hardening in the fall. Irrigation is needed for the first three years after planting. At the end of the growing season, it is advisable to slow down watering to trigger hardening. Sowing the aisle with a cereal or grass seeds will keep humidity and will encourage competitiveness for water later in the season, triggering hardening more. We suggest having hedge sheltering planting against prevailing winds to avoid buds dry out in the winter.

One bush can yield 10 to 15 kg of berries at maturity. There is no need to prune flowers. Prune the plants in late winter before the release of dormancy. Do not prune in summer or fall, this will provoke more vegetative growth and discourage hardening. Remove branches that intermixed in the middle of the bush to avoid wounds. Do not prune more than 25% of the total wood volume in one year to avoid overstimulation of vegetative growth and revert the bush in a non-flowering mode, thus reducing yield next season. Make sure you favor light penetration in the bush center and start pruning only after the 4th or 5th year of growth. Dwarf sour cherry is auto fertile and does not need a second variety or cultivars to cross pollinate. Bees will favor pollination and are recommended.

Under our humid climate in the east part of the continent as compared to the continental climate of the Prairies, where those varieties have been developed, protective spray program against fungi is mandatory. If not, early defoliation will occur and your bushes will be set back in the middle of summer. Consult your local agronomist to know more about the appropriate spray program for your culture. Insects, bacterial canker are to monitor, but dwarf sour cherries are less susceptible to black knots than native varieties are.