



## Factors to consider

### Factors that affect plants

#### Sun

Most fruit trees need at least six hours of direct sunlight per day. North-facing areas will usually deliver this. Early-morning sunshine is good for quickly drying out the leaves, which helps prevent some diseases.

Remember the sun is much lower in the winter, and it can be surprising how long the shadow from a building or tree gets at a time when you most want the sunlight (see the diagram below).

#### Wind

Strong wind can damage plant growth, stop insects from pollinating the flowers, and make the fruit fall before it's ripe. Edible plants grown close together as a hedge (e.g. feijoas, olives) make good windbreaks.

#### Water

Make sure you can get a hose to your plants. You'll need to water them regularly during the first year after planting; also if they're in containers. Once they're established, water them in early summer and occasionally during ripening, to make the fruit juicy and help the plants resist pests and diseases.

If you're in a dry area near Blenheim that has light, stony soil, water little and often – otherwise the water just drains away and is wasted. If water lies around the planting site for several days after rain, dig some drains to guide the water away so it doesn't kill the plant's roots.

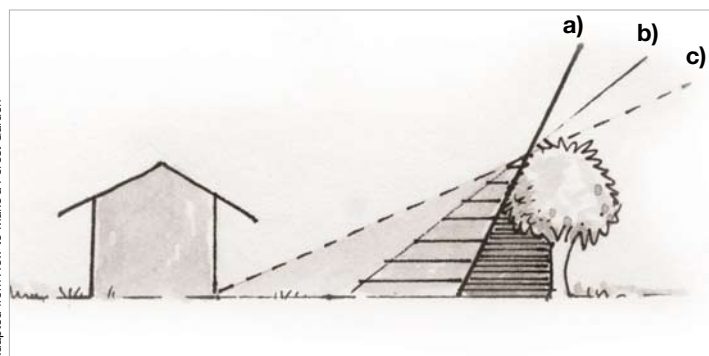
#### Type of soil

The quality of the soil is important, as fruiting plants stay in the same place for a long time. They grow best in free-draining, fertile soil. If your soil doesn't fit that description, you'll need to:

- choose the kinds of plants that suit your soil (see the section 'Part 3 – Essential Plant Info')
- add plenty of organic matter when you prepare the planting area.

A simple soil test is to dig up a handful of soil and pick out any sticks and stones. Dampen it, squeeze it, and see if you can mould it into a sausage shape.

- Clay soil sticks together and holds water, so it moulds well. In summer it can bake solid. It's usually full of nutrients, and just needs to have plenty of organic matter and a dose of gypsum worked into it.
- Sandy soil is light and gritty, and won't mould in your hand. It drains easily and lacks nutrients, so it needs heaps of organic matter worked into it to hold water and provide nutrients.
- Silty soil, which is ideal for growing fruit, is in between these. It sticks together when you mould it, but falls apart if you press the 'sausage' flat. It's free draining and high in nutrients. You'll find silty soil on old river flats e.g. Renwick.



#### Sun angles:

- a) Sun is high in summer, casting a short shadow.
- b) Autumn and spring positions.
- c) Sun is low in winter, casting a much longer shadow.

## Factors to consider

Having clay is not always a bad thing. Atawhai clay is rich in nutrients, once you've added gypsum and lime to make them available to plants.

The Wither Hills area has stony clay similar to Atawhai's. Unfortunately, Moutere clay contains less goodness, and nutrients need to be added.

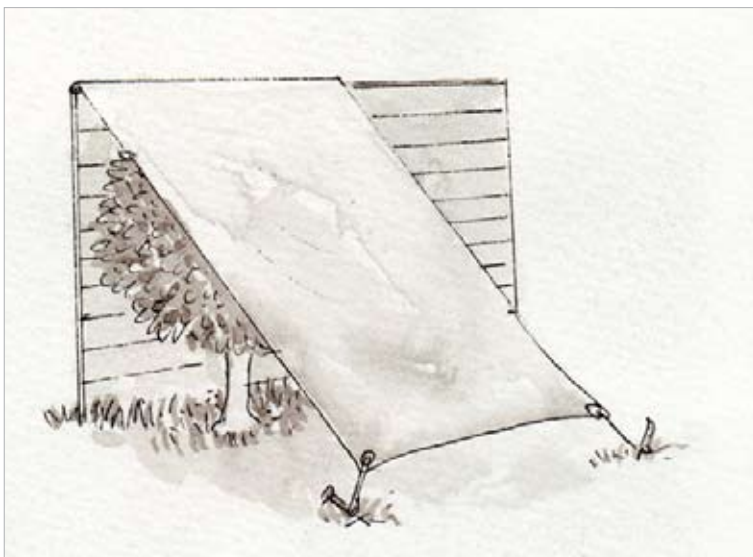
### *Frost*

If you have serious spring frosts, don't get plants that flower early, as frost can ruin the blossoms – and the whole season's crop. Grow tender plants next to a wall or fence so you can make a shelter to protect them on frosty nights (see the diagram below).

Cold air flows downwards and 'pools' in low places. Make sure the cover doesn't form a hollow over the top of the plant, as the frost could concentrate there and damage it, instead of sliding away from the plant.

### *Protection from birds*

For some fruits, the birds will take the lot just before they're ripe enough for you to pick. Group at-risk plants together and protect them with netting. Growing fruit trees on wires makes this easier.



### **Frost protector:**

Cover tender plants for the night when heavy frosts threaten.

## A Riwaka gardener

One absolute necessity when planting berries is to protect them from birds. Cover them all with netting. Otherwise there's open slaughter and not a bite for the belly.

I've stapled bird-netting right down the side of the house then pegged it to the fence, forming a roof, and some more is draped over the ends.

In there, we have white, black, and redcurrants, a dwarf peach, boysenberries, a thornless blackberry, two cranberries and two gooseberries.

### *Need a pollinator?*

Some plants need a 'pollinator' nearby (i.e. another plant of the same type, flowering at the same time) to make sure the blossoms are cross-pollinated and form fruits.

A pollinator can be another tree on your own property or a neighbour's, or it can be a branch of another compatible variety grafted onto your tree.

Check out whether the fruit trees you want to grow need a pollinator.