



FILBERT CULTURE

Filberts, also called hazelnuts, are delicious nuts, eaten out of hand and in candy, cookies and other baked goods. Filberts can be grown in eastern Washington. In fact, there are native filbert trees in our area as far north as British Columbia.

There is a limiting factor to filbert production in eastern Washington. While the trees themselves are hardy, blooms are damaged by temperatures below 15°F. These temperatures are not uncommon during the bloom time, which runs from late February through March. Consider this risk when deciding whether or not to try filberts.

The filberts grown for nut production in our yards and commercially are *Corylus avellana*, the European filbert. There are other filberts that one may consider for ornamental purposes.

PLANTING SITE: Filberts like sun and deep, well-drained soil. They will do okay in shallower soils, but watering becomes an important concern. Plant trees about 20 feet apart. If you want to create a hedge with the filberts, then plant them about 5 feet apart.

HABIT: Most filberts are 15 to 20 feet tall at maturity and are equally wide. Filberts do well when allowed to grow naturally as a shrub. If left alone, the filbert can become a “Trub”. A “Trub” is a plant that cannot decide if it is a tree or a shrub. If a tree is desired, remove suckers and unwanted branches. Filbert trees are trained with central leaders.

LIFESPAN: Filberts will live about 50 years. They begin bearing after an average of four years. But it takes about seven years for filberts to become fully productive.

WATER: They need average water. Do not allow them to dry out during our hot, dry summers. Be especially careful to keep the ground moist if your filbert is planted in shallow soil.

FERTILIZER: No fertilizer is needed if there is good growth and dark green leaves. If fertilizer is required, apply 1/2 to 1 pound of nitrogen per year per tree in early spring.

PRUNING: Young trees are trained to develop three to six strong scaffold branches. Mature filberts need moderate pruning each year to stimulate stem growth. The best nut production is on shoots 6 to 9 inches long. If filbert is grown in shrub form, remove excess suckers when suckers are less than 10 inches high.

HARVEST: Filberts begin to drop from the tree as they ripen. Harvest is usually in October. Gather nuts frequently - don't leave them on the ground for long. Keep the ground around the tree clean and free of weeds and tall grass so that nuts can be swept or raked into piles for easy harvest. The nuts that drop first may be blanks (empty) or wormy. Discard them. If the nuts are dirty they can be washed in warm water. If the nuts are ripe the husks can easily be removed. This varies with varieties.

DRYING: Nuts need to be dried before storage. They can be placed in a warm, dry area a few layers deep for two to four weeks. Stir every day or so. If you have a food dryer, 90 to 105° is ideal. This method takes only two to four days. When filberts are collected the nutmeat is white and firm. As they dry they become spongy and creamy in color. When the nuts become firm again and are creamy to the center, they are dry.

STORAGE: Filberts will keep in the shell at room temperature for several months. If shelled, they need to be used within a few weeks or can be refrigerated or frozen for up to a year. Store in plastic bags..

ROASTING: Roasting will greatly enhance the flavor. Place shelled nuts in an oven at 275° for 20 to 30 minutes or until skins crack. The nuts should be crunchy after they have cooled, not rubbery. Use soon or freeze.

SELECTIONS/VARIETIES: You must have two different varieties within about 50 feet of each other for good pollination. Filbert varieties are generally designated as either producers or pollinators. Pollinator trees produce good nuts, just not as much as producers.

See chart below to select filbert cultivators:

CULTIVAR	NUT SIZE	YIELD	HARDINESS	BEST USES
Barcelona	Medium	Medium	Moderate	Producer
Ennis	Medium	High	Moderate	Producer
Daviana	Medium	Low	Moderate	Pollinator
Butler	Medium	Medium	High	Pollinator
Hall's Giant	Large	Low	High	Pollinator

Insects

Aphids: Feed on leaves, excrete honeydew, making plants sticky. Heavy infestations reduce size of nuts and crop.

Control: Apply malathion EC or insecticidal soap when aphids are present.

Filbert worm: Adults are grayish moths. Larvae are whitish and about 1/2 inch long when mature.

Control: Apply Bt (Dipel, Thuricide) in early July and again three weeks later.

Diseases

European Filberts are susceptible to Eastern Filbert Blight, a fungal bark disease. Control the disease by spraying copper and dormant oil together at bud break in late March and again in mid April and early May.