



TREE CARE SHEET *for* **PURPLE-LEAF PLUM** **(Prunus Cerasifera)**

SITE SELECTION

Choose a sunny site with well-drained soil that is protected from strong winds. To get the richest leaf color and best flowering, grow in full sun. Ornamental plums can grow in shade, but the foliage will tend to remain green in shady locations.

Give your plum tree plenty of space for roots as well as crown. Good air circulation around the tree helps prevent disease. Do not plant your tree in a lawn or with other plants that require more frequent irrigation.

WATER

How much water your tree needs depends on your soil, the temperature and wind, and the size of the tree, so you'll need to adjust as you go. Monitor the soil around the new tree and keep the root ball moist, but not wet. Avoid wetting the trunk. Depending on rain, your new tree may not need much irrigation until the weather is warm and new growth is several inches long.

In a moderate summer, your first-year tree is likely to need 5 to 10 gallons a week, applied every 1 to 2 weeks. You want to wet the soil to a depth of 18 to 24 inches. As the tree grows, move the watering to the outer portion of the canopy. As the tree becomes mature, you'll also need to increase the amount of water and move to less frequent, deeper irrigation. To evaluate your irrigation, observe your tree (drooping or failure to thrive could mean water problems) and occasionally dig into the soil to see how far down you are wetting. Weeding and mulching around the tree will keep down the amount of water you need. Be sure to keep the mulch 4- 6 inches away from the trunk.

FERTILIZING

Most Alameda soils are sandy and fast draining and nutrients leach out quickly, so you may want to fertilize. But be careful not to over-fertilize as this will cause

excessive new growth and can burn the roots. Avoid using fertilizer stakes, as they might burn roots, even to the point of killing an immature tree.

For both new and mature trees, a slow-release fertilizer can be beneficial, to avoid the nutrients leaching too quickly through the soil. Follow the package directions, and apply in the root zone (under the whole canopy), not right at the base of the trunk. Whenever fertilizing, irrigate immediately after applying the fertilizer, and if it is very dry, also irrigate a day before.

PRUNING AND BRANCH THINNING

Pruning ornamental trees is different than for fruit trees. Ornamental trees need pruning just to achieve a desirable shape and to control excess growth. Generally, prune when the leaves are off (when the tree is dormant) – it's easier to see what you are doing.

Pruning tips:

- Angle cuts at about 45 degrees away from the nearby bud or stem. Avoid short stubs.
- Heading cuts (cutting the end of the branch off) will stimulate branching a few inches below the cut; thinning cuts (cutting the branch off at the trunk) stimulate less growth.
- When pruning, remove weak, diseased or dead limbs; any limbs pointing downward; watersprouts (extremely vigorous shoots going straight up); branches that touch one another; and any sprouting below the grafting junction.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Especially if it's growing in the sun, your tree may bear small "cherry plums" in late summer. While not generally sought out by humans, the birds love them.
- If the tree attracts aphids, first try hosing them off (repeatedly) with a strong spray of water. If that fails, you can spray with insecticidal soap or horticultural oil.
- Spider mites may appear under drought conditions. Keep the tree watered, but if it becomes infected, release predatory mites to feed on the harmful ones, or use insecticidal soap, neem or sulphur.