

The Beginnings of an Orchard

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Image: *Kiwi fruit arch looking into the old golden plum grove.*

Journal

Our Adventures

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This year, we decided it was finally time to begin planting trees on our site – the start of an orchard. So, early this spring, we began the project by clearing nearly an acre of our land. This involved cutting lots of salmonberry and rose bush, brush burning, and root pulling. A very good way to get into shape!

We are not planting the typical 20' x 20' gridded orchard, but are trying to create a scenic garden with meandering paths which just happens to contain a large number of fruit trees and bushes. The trees and shrubs for our project have come from several sources: (1) trees we have rescued from local abandoned homesteads; (2) trees which have been gifted to us by our neighbors; (3) trees that were originally on the property that we we have rehabilitated; and (4) an assortment of trees and shrubs that we acquired in Campbell River during the last couple of months.

So what has this generated? An interesting mix of plants ... time will determine if we have made good choices. And of course, there is still room to add many more species and varieties over the years to come.



Image: Haskap berry (or honeyberry honeysuckle – *Lonicera caerulea*) arch with blueberries and squash in the foreground.

A path leads from the house into the main orchard area through a trellised arch which will support haskap berries (*Lonicera caerulea*). Near this arch is a patch of low growing shrubs – four varieties of blueberries (Sweetheart [two crops – early and late season], Duke [early season], Blue Crop [mid season], and Bonus [mid to late season]), a Japanese quince, two varieties of cranberry (ligonberry [*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*] and American cranberry [*Vaccinium macrocarpon*]), and a Loganberry bush (a hybrid of blackberry [*Rubus ursinus*] and raspberry [*Rubus idaeus*]).

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Past the arch, we have planted a several dwarf fruit trees, and hope to plant more in the future. Three of these trees are “frankentrees”, or multiply-grafted fruit trees. One, which I refer to a “*Prunus frankus*” has a Frost peach [*Prunus persica*], a Hardy Red nectarine [*Prunus nuci*], a Puget Gold apricot [*Prunus armeniaca*], a Stella cherry [*Prunus avium*], a Lapin cherry [*Prunus avium*], and an Italian prune plum [*Prunus domestica*] grafts. The other two are franken-apples [*Malus frankus*“]. One has been espaliered and will form a low-growing, mostly horizontal tree. It has five varieties grafted onto a dwarf rootstock – Gala, Honeycrisp, Spartan, Fuji, and Braeburn. The other is a “normally”-growing dwarf apple tree with five grafted varieties – Liberty, Winesap, Yellow Delicious, Cortland, and Red McIntosh. We decided to start our orchard with the frankentrees because they would help us determine which fruit will do best in our climate, and also since they make very good pollinators.



Image: *Kiwi arch and Prunus frankus tree.*



Image: *Espaliered franken-apple tree.*



Image: Franken-apple, oak, and plum tree (in background).

Moving further into the orchard, towards the cedar tree by the creek, we have planted trees that will grow larger. Here, there are two oak trees (white oaks – *Quercus alba*), a rescued cherry (possibly a Bing or a Stella), and a rescued plum (possibly a Victoria plum). In between these trees, we have a Golgi berry (*Lycium barbarum*) and a fig tree (brown turkey).

Finally, a second arch leads away from the orchard towards the creek and the old Golden plum grove that we have cleared the brush away from. This arch is also trellised, and will support hardy kiwi fruit (Issai kiwi – *Actinidia arguta*).

And there you have it – the beginnings of our orchard!