

How to Grow Breadfruit

Young plants prefer partial shade. It is best to plant at the onset of the rainy season, but if the weather is dry, water as needed for the first 1–3 months of establishment. Before planting, carefully trim the lower leaves reducing their size by 1/2 to 2/3. Do not remove or damage the growing point of the plant where new leaves develop.

Dig a hole the same depth of the container and twice as wide as the container. Add a small amount of slow-release fertilizer, such as 8–8–8 slow release fertilizer, to the bottom of the hole and cover with soil.

To prevent injury to the delicate root system, carefully cut off the container rather than pulling the plant out.

Place the breadfruit tree in the hole, add soil no higher than the level of the plant in the pot, top dress with compost, and water well. Mulching young plants is beneficial by helping keep the soil moist and adding a steady supply of nutrients. It also helps control weeds around the root system. Use of herbicides to control weeds around the base of the tree can damage the tree if it comes in contact with the surface roots or young trunk. Young trees need to be protected from cattle, goats, horses, and pigs that will eat

Pests and Diseases

Breadfruit is a relatively trouble-free plant to grow. The major problem is fruit rots. The best control is to remove and dispose of affected fruit when the brown spots occur, to prevent the spread to other fruit. Fruit flies are attracted to ripe fruit in the tree and on the ground.

General Information

Breadfruit is traditionally grown in home gardens or integrated mixed agroforestry systems. It is often grown on steep hillsides, especially on the high islands of the Pacific. The trees provide shade, mulch, and a beneficial microclimate and can be planted with a wide array of useful plants.

The spreading surface roots are easily hit and damaged by mowers or other equipment so it is best to keep trees mulched. Provide a complete fertilizer at the beginning and end of the fruiting season to maintain the health and vigor of trees, especially trees that are 10 or more years old.

Pruning should be limited to the removal of dead branches but trees are frequently topped to make it easier to reach and harvest fruit. However, the new shoots and branches are brittle and break easily.

Harvesting Breadfruit

Fruit are generally picked when mature, but not yet ripe. Fruit that falls to the ground will be bruised and soften sooner than those that are gently handled. For fruit within easy reach, simply cut or twist the stem to snap it from the branch; turn the fruit upside down to let the sap bleed from the end of the stem. Higher fruit are harvested with a sharp scythe or curved knife attached to the end of a long, sturdy pole. A basket or net attached to the end of the pole makes harvesting easier and safer.

It is important to select breadfruit at the right stage of maturity. To use breadfruit as a potato substitute select a fully mature, firm fruit. The skin should be greenish-yellow with slight brown cracking or crusting around the individual sections and a few splotches of dried sap. The flesh is firm and creamy white or pale yellow in color.

A ripe breadfruit has a yellow-green to yellow-brown peel and is soft to the touch with a sweet, aromatic smell. Fruit that are not quite mature are bright green and bleed a sticky white sap when cut or bruised. The flesh will still be pale green just beneath the skin.