

Cherry

Prunus avium (sweet) / *P. cerasus* (sour) · Rose family

DIFFICULTY Moderate–hard
TYPE Deciduous perennial tree
MATURITY 4–7 years to first fruit



SUN
Full sun



WATER
Regular, deep



SOIL PH
6.0–7.0



SPACING
5–8m (or dwarf
rootstock,
smaller)



DEPTH
graft union
above soil

01 High chill, needs netting

Sweet cherries have among the highest chill requirements of common stone fruit and are a magnet for birds — reliable netting infrastructure is almost as important as the growing itself.



loose stake, first year

02 Planting

METHOD	Plant bare-rooted while dormant; consider a dwarf rootstock for easier netting.
SOIL	Well-drained, fertile.
TIMING	Plant in winter while dormant.

Planting timing varies significantly by Australian climate zone. Set your zone above (or use the Find My Climate Zone tool) for guidance tailored to your own area.

04 Problems

- **Birds** — the single biggest challenge; net well before fruit ripens.
- **Fruit fly** — net or bag as an added measure.
- **Brown rot** — improve airflow, remove affected fruit.
- **Poor fruit set** — insufficient chill or no pollinator.

03 Growing care

- Check chill hour requirements carefully — many sweet cherries need very cold winters.
- Plant a compatible pollinator unless growing a self-fertile variety.
- Net thoroughly as fruit colours up — birds will otherwise take the whole crop.
- Prune in summer to reduce disease entry.

05 Harvest & storage

SIGNS	Full colour and firm-plump, sweet on tasting.
METHOD	Cut with scissors rather than pulling, leaving the stem attached.
CURING	None needed.
STORAGE	Fridge, about a week.
PRESERVING	See Canning & Bottling (bottling a fruit glut) or Dehydrating (dried fruit) for ways to keep a harvest surplus.

06 Companions & rotation

PLANT NEARBY	AVOID NEARBY	ROTATION NOTE
Comfrey	Walnut (allelopathic)	Not applicable — long-lived perennial tree.