



GARDEN NOTES

FILBERTS - NUTTY TREES, SHRUBS AND “TRUBS”

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Filberts are one of those plants that can be grown as a shrub or tree. If left alone, they can become a “trub.” A trub is a plant that cannot decide if it is a tree or a shrub. It gets bushy, but grows to a height of more than 15 feet, which classifies it as a true trub.

“Filberts, or hazelnuts, are actually one of my favorite nuts,” says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. “They should be trained and grown as a tree because they are more productive as a tree, and make a mean-spirited, lousy shrub.”

When trained as a tree, hazelnuts can grow to about 20 feet high, with an equal spread, he says. They require cross pollination so two different varieties need to be planted. They bloom earlier than most plants, with the male catkins appearing about mid-March. The female flowers are inconspicuous, but follow the male flowers.

Hazelnuts can be grown in about any soil type, Goodspeed explains. Like most plants, they prefer a well drained, rich soil. They produce in a light shade, but do best in full sun locations.

There are a number of different varieties on the market, he says. Ask your local nursery which are available. Three of the most common are Hall’s Giant, Barcelona and Daviana. Barcelona is noted for having the best flavored nut, but Hall’s Giant produces the largest.

Some hazelnuts are grown for ornamental reasons, he adds. The Turkish filbert (*Corylus colurna*) is a large tree that grows to a height of about 40 feet. Its pyramidal shape gives it a stately, handsome appearance.

The Turkish filbert can be used as a street tree, in parks, large lawn areas and in hot areas where other trees struggle, Goodspeed says. It can adapt to different soil types, but does need some drainage. It is not a common tree, but may be well worth the effort to track it down. It produces nuts that are edible, but not considered to be real flavorful. It has few insect and disease problems and, once established, does well in Northern Utah.

Another quite popular hazelnut is the contorted filbert (*Corylus avellana Contorta*), he says. Its uniquely twisted shape adds variety to winter landscapes. It is a plant that only grows 8

to 10 feet high. Not only are the branches and twigs twisted, but the leaves are irregular in shape and appearance.

“The contorted filbert rarely, if ever, produces any nuts,” Goodspeed says. “It is also adaptable to many soil types, but is a bit more fussy than the Turkish filbert, if it isn't given proper drainage. It is available in many nurseries and garden centers, but should only be used sparingly in the landscape.”

The purple giant filbert (*Corylus maxima* var. *purpurea*) is a small tree or large shrub with purple-colored leaves, he says. It can reach a height of about 15 to 20 feet with about an equal spread. Its beautiful purple leaves in the spring make the tree very striking. The leaves' intense color fades during the summer (like most purple-leafed trees), but it still remains attractive in the landscape. It also is not noted for its nut production, but is grown for its ornamental value.

The three ornamental plants mentioned cannot be used as pollinators for the edible hazelnuts, he cautions. Filberts should be grown for their ornamental value or for their nuts, but most landscapes are not big enough to grow both kinds.

For more information, contact your local [**USU County Extension office.**](#)

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