

KASHMIR READER

Expert advice: How to plant a new tree or lay a new orchard

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Shopian: Spring is expected to arrive early in Kashmir this year, and orchardists are preparing to go to work. The work starts with plantation of new fruit plants, but many still use outdated techniques or are unaware of the dos and don'ts of how to plant a new tree or lay a new orchard.

Till about a decade ago, many orchardists used to randomly buy or grow plants to make new fruit orchards. Kashmir Reader spoke to a senior SKAUST scientist, Dr Tariq Rasool, to know what things should be followed before planting a fresh orchard.

He said that before planting a tree, its root system/ graft union must be checked for any rotting. Even a little rotting can either kill a plant in few years or restrict its growth, he said.

"Remove the dead/rotten wood and apply a fungicidal paste in the fresh flesh so as to avoid any infection which may lead to the death of the tree," he said.

Dr Rasool said that orchardists should check for white grubs in soil also as these are becoming a serious issues in many areas. "Drench the soil with insecticide (chloripyriphos + cypermethrin) which is very effective in orchards and then plant the tree," he advised.

However, excessive compost should not be used around the plants, as when it rains in spring, it drenches the root zone with high compost and inhabits root growth, thereby killing the plant, Dr Rasool said.

"If there is low PH in soils, it is the best time to mix some lime (calcium hydroxide/oxide) in the pits which will maintain the water cycle as per the requirement of soil and will also help in absorption of different minerals on time," he said.

Dr Rasool advised that sufficient gap between the trees should be maintained. It will not only help in development of the tree but also keep many diseases at bay as sufficient air dries the wet areas after rain.

"One should also keep in mind while making a new orchard to keep the direction so aligned that the plant receives sunlight from sunrise till sunset. This helps in the tree's growth and the branches bear good fruit," he said.

Dr Rasool said that before making a new orchard, one must carry out a soil test. "It should be a comprehensive soil test which tests its fertility, availability of water, and what fruit will best nourish in that particular soil," he said.

Dr Rasool added that in a soil test it should also be taken into consideration which variety of a particular fruit brand will thrive in it.

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