

## IS IT A BIRD OR A FRUIT?

WHEN NEW ZEALAND FARMERS STARTED GROWING 'CHINESE GOOSEBERRY' THEY WERE SO PROUD OF THIS EXOTIC NEW CROP THEY RENAMED IT KIWI AFTER THEIR FUNNY-LOOKING, YET BELOVED NATIONAL BIRD. BOTH HAVE A FUZZY BROWN EXTERIOR, AND NEITHER BIRD NOR FRUIT CAN FLY.

## IN THE VINEYARD WITH GEORGE PETKOV, BC KIWIFRUIT GROWER...

Our vineyard is located on the rolling hills of the beautiful Mt. Lehman area in Abbotsford in the Fraser Valley. Like grapes, kiwifruit grow on woody vines supported by trellis, also called 'pergola'. That's why we call it a vineyard.

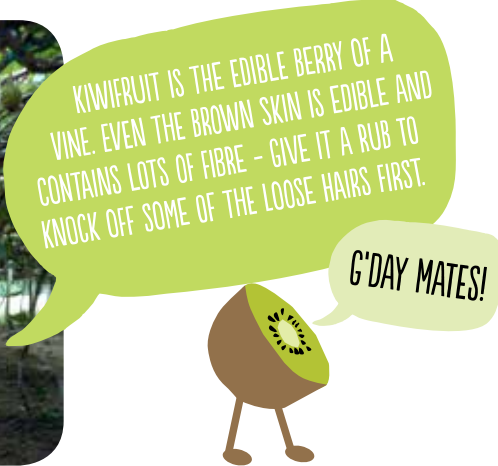
Mt. Lehman is an ideal place for growing kiwifruit. The air is clean and fresh. The soil is fertile with organic materials and nutrients. The water feeding our sustainable drip irrigations is among the purest in the world. And, our (mostly) moderate climate in the winter rarely dips below -18°C, so our plants are usually safe from freezing.

**WHY DO I GROW KIWIFRUIT?** For starters, these exotic fruit are one of the healthiest on the planet. Plus, like bananas, kiwifruit do not ripen on the plant, they ripen in cold storage where they can be kept for up to 6 months. When local availability of most healthy fruit is sparse and expensive, our supply of kiwifruit is at its peak of freshness and ready for local distribution. Our family liked the idea of growing a healthy, fresh, pesticide-free fruit that was a locally-grown option at a time of year when most fresh fruit is imported. We also discovered that this healthy, great tasting fruit from New Zealand was becoming very popular. So, a few years ago we planted a kiwifruit vineyard on our 8 acre farm.

**WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A KIWIFRUIT GROWER?** A Masters Degree in Horticulture (the study of growing plants) and loads of experience working on agricultural projects (such as I have) is useful. But, the most important things a grower needs (along with land) is an ongoing commitment of knowledge, hard work and passion. It takes 7 years for a kiwifruit vine to mature from seed, and then a mature vine can produce as many as 1000 kiwifruit in one year. A kiwifruit grower needs patience first, then the ability to work hard.



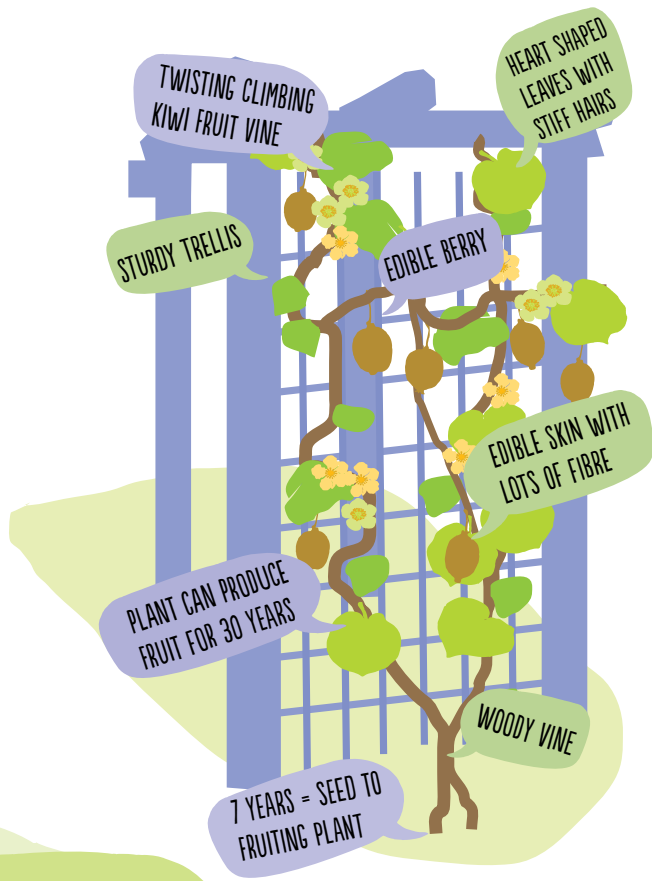
Photo courtesy of BC Kiwifruit Growers



Fresh Story: Get to Know Your Fruits and Vegetables

INTERMEDIATE

# Kiwifruit



**HOW TO TRAIN YOUR KIWI...** Although you can't train kiwifruit vines like your dog (or dragon), they are vigorous climbers that when left to their own can get out of hand. Growers train their vines with careful pruning in the spring to get the most fruit yield from each plant. The vines exert great pressure when loaded with fruit so the trellises need to be strong. How many kiwifruit does a well-trained vine produce in one year? With proper training (along with irrigation, pollination & plenty of sunlight) as many as 1000.

Kiwifruit vines are **dioecious** which means a vine is either male or female. Both male and female vines need to be planted together. While female vines produce the fruit, the male blossoms are needed to cross pollinate the female blossoms.

During harvest time (in late October) growers use a handheld instrument called a **Brix refractometer** to determine the average sugar level in the fruit. When it reaches 7% sugar the entire field is harvested by hand. At this point, the fruit is still hard and too sour to eat, but they are picked, graded and packed into cartons and kept in cold storage where they continue to ripen naturally.

## MAP IT OUT...

KIWIFRUIT VINES CAN BE KILLED BY COLD WEATHER, EVEN WHEN DORMANT IN THE WINTER. THAT'S WHY BC IS THE ONLY PLACE IN CANADA WHERE KIWIFRUIT IS COMMERCIALY GROWN. KIWIFRUIT ARE GROWN IN THE **Fraser Valley**, AND ON THE SOUTHERNMOST TIP OF **vancouver island**, THE REGION OF OUR MOST MODERATE TEMPERATURES.



FIND **Abbotsford** ON THE GROW BC MAP (YOU'VE JUST FOUND THE LOCATION OF BOTH PETKOV VINEYARDS AND THE OFFICE OF BC AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM).



LOCATE THE **grape-growing regions** ON THE GROW BC MAP TO SEE WHERE KIWIFRUIT VINEYARDS COULD ALSO GROW.

## DO THE MATH...



Kiwifruit vines are planted about 4.5 metres apart in rows 4.5 metres apart, resulting in about 190 vines per acre.

The Petkov family's vineyard is 8 acres. Estimate the number of kiwifruit vines they have on their vineyard:

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With a ratio of 1 male to 8 females planted, how many female plants are there per acre?

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