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Trees from seed mean low quality

The home gardener with notions of becoming a modern-day Johnny Appleseed is in for some disappointments. Apples and other fruit trees grown from seed generally aren't of high quality.

Tree fruit specialists at Michigan State University say that most fruit trees are produced from vegetative plant parts rather than from seeds. By grafting buds or twigs of one variety onto the rootstock or limbs of another variety, the nurseryman creates a tree with the best characteristics of both parts. For example, he can grow full-sized fruit on a miniature tree by combining a standard-sized variety with a dwarfing rootstock.

Vegetative propagation, as the production of plants by budding, grafting and other such methods is called, produces plants identical to the parent plant. Growing fruit trees from seed, on the other hand, usually produces plants that are different than and usually inferior to the parent plant.

THIS HAPPENS because most fruit trees are hybrids, or plants produced by crossing two or more different varieties. When the flowers are pollinated and the seeds form, the desirable traits of the parent plants are often lost in the shuffle of

genetic material. The resulting offspring may be very unlike its parents.

Genetic changes are often the source of new varieties, the specialists note. But these "sports," or mutations, are usually the result of changes within a small part of a single tree rather than the result of cross-breeding. The chances of producing an improved variety by growing fruit trees from seed are very poor, they advise.

Even if high quality fruit trees could be grown from seed, the time necessary for such trees to grow to bearing age would make them impractical, the MSU specialists point out. Grafted trees bear at a younger age than trees grown from seed.

Zap ants

The best way to control ants in the home is to find and destroy their nest, say Michigan State University entomologists.

If you can't eliminate the nest, treat the pathways the ants follow into or through your house to kill the pests before they can get into food storage or serving areas.

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