



GROWING *edibles* IN PERTH

How to Grow Dragon Fruit

You may have seen a mysterious pink fruit in your local fruit and vegie store that resembles some kind of magical dragon's egg. It is called a Dragon Fruit but it is not laid by dragons or eaten by dragons. It is, in fact, the exotic fruit from a particular type of cactus called a Hylocereus plant. Native to Central and South America, they prefer warm, tropical climates.

The distinct scaly fruit is larger than an orange with attractive coloured skin. When it is cut open, there is sweet tasting flesh, flecked with black seeds and it has a unique flavour a bit like a kiwi fruit. There are red, yellow and white fleshed varieties that all taste delicious. The flesh can be used in fruit platters, added to smoothies or mixed into salads.

This climbing cactus is spectacular and can grow up to 10 metres high. They produce high white flowers in Spring that only open at night. The flowers are followed by the fruit in summer. The plants usually start to flower in as little as six to eight months. They can be grown in a pot or a container but can take up to two years to flower. Once mature, they can fruit four to six times a year and are capable of bearing fruit for 2 or 3 decades.

For best results:

- Must be trained up a trellis, on a frame or a sturdy pole to allow the top branches to hang and produce the night blooming Spring flowers and Summer fruit.
- Plant in well-drained soil enriched with organic matter.
- Choose a full sun to part shade position.
- Protect from frost and strong winds.
- Fertiliser in Spring and Summer with a slow-release fertiliser such as Growsafe or Troforte.
- Water weekly during summer, and only once every 2 or 3 weeks for the rest of the year. Remember it is a cactus, and it does not like to be over watered.
- After fruiting, prune once every couple of years or as needed. Remove the longer branches and compost the plant after pruning.

This is intended as general information only. Please ask one of our horticulturists for specific advice for your situation.