Kieffer-source pear seedlings

Blackford Valley Farm | Wildlife planting guide

This seed lot is labeled Kieffer. It will produce genetically variable seedlings, not grafted Kieffer trees. Even when seed comes from a Kieffer fruit, pollination introduces another parent, so the offspring cannot be promised Kieffer fruit or performance.

Intended use

These seedlings are grown for **wildlife food and attracting deer**, especially on hunting land. Their fruit may be small, tart, astringent, blemished, or otherwise less appealing to people than fruit from a selected grafted tree. Fruit size, flavor, yield, first-bearing age, and drop date are individual-seedling traits; there is no guarantee that these trees will match the fruit pictured or the named cultivar. If dependable eating quality is the goal, choose a grafted cultivar.

Choose a site

- **Sun and soil:** Give trees full sun for strong fruiting and **well-drained soil**. Avoid low spots that hold water; water new trees during dry spells and maintain a grass-free area near the trunk.
- **Space: Pear seedlings can grow into full-size trees**, often roughly 25–40 feet tall, rather than staying the size of a dwarf grafted pear. Give them generous crown space and leave access for mowing and checking fallen fruit.
- **Climate:** Choose a planting site that suits the local hardiness zone. A seed label alone does not prove the seedlings will tolerate every Iowa winter; the unknown pollen parent and seed origin matter.

Soil, roots, and water

University of Georgia recommends **pH 5.9-6.5 for pears generally**. Use that as a soil-test discussion target, not a measured optimum for this genetically variable Kieffer-source lot. Strongly acidic or basic soil can limit nutrient availability; yellowing warrants soil testing and diagnosis, not automatic fertilizer. Do not assume the named Kieffer cultivar's reported drought, flooding, or disease tolerance is inherited by these seedlings.

Choose deep, penetrable, **moist but aerated soil**, without waterlogging. Oregon State describes pears as comparatively clay-tolerant; favor drained clay, not permanent saturation or an assumed seedling flood tolerance. Its general orchard benchmark is **at least 3 feet of penetrable soil**, not a measured root length or a tested requirement for this lot. Hardpan, rock, compaction, and a high water table restrict rooting. Water at planting and check moisture frequently during the first growing seasons. When the root zone starts drying, water slowly over the roots and surrounding soil, allowing excess to drain. Mature trees generally need less watering, but prolonged drought can limit growth and developing pears.

Persistent saturation can suffocate roots, favor root-infecting pathogens, and kill a tree. Good drainage, suitable pH, and dependable moisture support canopy growth and fruit development; they do not guarantee bearing age, eating quality, drop date, or yield. Avoid excessive nitrogen, including heavy compost applications: tender growth is more susceptible to fire blight, which can kill pears. Prune modestly for light and airflow rather than forcing lush growth.

Pollination and deer use

Plant at least two genetically different pears with overlapping bloom, preferably several, for a better chance of fruit set. Bees move their pollen. Flowers alone are not proof that fruit will follow; spring frost, weather, and pollen compatibility matter. The fallen pears may attract deer in late summer or fall and add to food available near a hunting area. The timing and size of the crop will only become clear when each seedling matures; fruit may fall

before, during, or after the local hunting season. Deer visits also depend on other food and movement patterns, so no single tree guarantees deer at a stand. Observe productive trees and their fruit-drop windows before deciding which to favor or propagate.

Plant your potted seedling

We sell and recommend **potted seedlings**. Our planting method requires a **square hole, not a round one**. A wider hole is preferred, not required; it must fit the root ball without squeezing it. Dig no deeper than the root ball in its pot, and shallower as needed to leave the **top of the root ball slightly above surrounding ground level**. Rest it on firm soil so it does not settle too deep. Water the pot before removal; support the root ball, not the stem, and keep it together. Check for circling roots rather than forcing a root-bound ball into the hole. Backfill around the sides with native soil, taper soil to cover exposed side roots, and water thoroughly. Keep the root flare exposed; do not pile soil or mulch over the ball's top or against the trunk. Check both the root ball and nearby soil for moisture while roots establish.

Protect young trees

A well-staked, ventilated **5–6-foot tree tube** or effective tall cage is close to essential where deer browse. Deer can destroy shoots, and **rabbits, mice, and voles** can girdle a young stem and kill it. Seat and secure the tube bottom; check it for tunneling or nests, keep weeds and tall grass back, and expand or remove the guard as the crown and trunk grow. The tube can help a seedling get above browse height, but it needs maintenance. Watch for fire blight, especially after warm, wet bloom periods. A named seed parent does not guarantee disease resistance in its offspring.

Learn more

Use the soil-location map to screen survey pH layers, drainage, water storage, and rooting restrictions where recorded. Survey estimates are not a soil test or field inspection of the planting spot. Verify actual depth and seasonal wetness and test before amendments. The map does not measure current moisture or predict fruit yield.

- NC State Extension: general fruit-tree pH, drainage, and disease management
- University of Georgia Extension: general pear pH guidance
- Oregon State Extension: orchard soil depth and comparative pear clay tolerance
- NC State Extension: soil depth, aeration, pH, and nutrient availability
- University of Minnesota Extension: establishment watering and mulch
- Penn State Extension: why fruit trees grown from seed vary
- University of Minnesota Extension: growing pears, sun, pollination, and full-size roots
- Penn State Extension: deer and fallen orchard fruit
- Penn State Extension: tree shelters and rodent exclusion