When considering adding new plants to the landscape, think about a dual purpose plant. What about a shade tree that produces nuts or a shrub that produces berries. Before you start dragging plants home from the nursery, do your homework first.

**Site Selection:** Here is a list of criteria.
- Fruit require an open sunny spot with a minimum of six hours of direct light and good air circulation.
- Water source must be close by. Soaker hoses or low volume irrigation are preferred because they keep water off the foliage thereby reducing diseases.
- Soil must be well drained to avoid root diseases. Avoid low areas or spots were water puddles.
- Soil pH should be slightly acid, around 6.0 to 6.5, with the exception of blueberries which grow best in soil with a pH of 4.0 to 5.3.
- Is there adequate space for the plant? Find out how big the plant/variety will get at maturity.

**Selecting Varieties:** Select varieties adapted to our area. Deciduous fruit, also referred to as temperate fruit, have chilling requirements. Chilling hours are hours below 45°F and above 32°F while plants are dormant. Normal chilling hours for our area range from 420 to 540. If a variety is planted with low chilling hours, the plant will bloom too early and flowers/fruit will likely be damaged by freezes. Varieties with high chilling hours will never or rarely bear fruit here.

Purchase plants from FL nurseries or the southeast U.S. They will be better adapted to our area. Here are the some of the deciduous fruit and varieties recommended by the University of Florida for our area.

**Apples:** Varieties include ‘Anna’, ‘Dorsett Golden’, and ‘Tropic Sweet’. Plant two varieties for pollination and good fruit set. Spacing is 15’ by 20’.

**Blackberries:** Early trailing types (dewberries) include ‘Flordagrand’ and ‘Oklawaha’; plant one of each for cross pollination. Later fruiting semi-erect types are ‘Brazos’, ‘Cheyenne’, ‘Comanche’, and ‘Cherokee’, ‘Navaho’ and ‘Arapaho’. Semi-erect types are self-fruitful so only one variety is needed. ‘Navaho’ and Arapaho’ are thornless. Spacing is 5’ by 12’.

**Blueberries:** Rabbiteye blueberries are native to Florida and better adapted to north Florida than Highbush varieties. Examples of early rabbiteye varieties are ‘Beckyblue’, ‘Bonita’, ‘Woodard’ and ‘Climax’. Mid to late varieties are ‘Brightwell’, ‘Powderblue’, ‘Premier’ and ‘Tifblue’. Plant two or more varieties within the group (early vs. mid to late) for cross pollination. Spacing is 6’ by 12’.

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Pear: Varieties are ‘Flordahome’, ‘Pineapple’ and ‘Hood’. Use ‘Hood’ to pollinate the other two. Spacing is 20’ by 20’.

Pecans: Varieties include ‘Elliot’, ‘Stuart’, ‘Curtis’, and ‘Moreland’. ‘Elliot’ and ‘Moreland’ are considered to have higher nut quality and all are relatively resistant to scab. Plant 2 or more varieties for cross pollination. Spacing is 60’ by 60’.

Persimmons: Persimmons are divided into astringent and non astringent types. Astringent types must mature completely or will be very tart whereas non-astringent types can be eaten sooner when the flesh is firm. Astringent types include ‘Hachiya’, ‘Saijo’, ‘Ramopan’, ‘Tanenashi’, and ‘Gailey’. Non-astringent types include ‘Fuyu’, ‘Hanafuyu’, ‘Izu’, ‘Matsumoto Wase Fuyu’, ‘O’Gosho’, ‘Jiro’, and ‘Motsumoto’. Persimmons will set a heavier crop if a pollinator variety is used. Both ‘Hachiya’ and ‘Gailey’ are pollinator varieties so plant one of these with one of the other varieties. If ‘Gailey’ is used, resulting fruit on both trees will have some seeds. Spacing is 10’ by 15’.

For more information on deciduous fruit:
- Blackberries http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs104
- Blueberries http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg359
- Deciduous Fruit for North Florida http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg211.
- Figs http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg214
- Muscadine Grapes http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs100
- Pecans http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pi217
- Training and pruning deciduous fruit: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG345.