A summer is the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness - and in our gardens and allotments bountiful fruitfulness! As apples and pears are now coming into crop, it's time to go picking.

If you have tall fruit trees, it can be difficult to pick everything high up in the tree and at the tips of the branches. Even using a ladder can restrict picking the topmost fruit and can be dangerous if you don't support and secure them properly. In these cases you might need to hire a cherry picker! Or do you?

Well, the simple answer is no. There are some fantastic fruit pickers available and those with telescopic handles can give you an easy picking height of up to 6m (20ft) depending on your height, reach and the length of handle you buy.

All but one of the pickers I tested have telescopic handles, and most of the suppliers have a range of different handle lengths, so you can choose a handle to suit your requirements.

Interchangeable tool head systems are more expensive than those with fixed heads, but if you want to create your own tree and shrub-care system - with loppers, saws and other attachments - then the price comes down and becomes far more reasonable.

The test
I tested a range of fruit pickers to gather apples, pears and plums from quite tall trees. I was looking at how well they removed the fruit, cushioned it from bruising and other damage and how easy they were to use at their maximum length.

**Wolf-Garten Multi-change Adjustable Fruit Picker**

Part of the Multi-change interchangeable tool system. The picking basket has rounded plastic teeth, you can adjust its angle with a wing nut and it has an integrated stainless steel blade.

- **Handle length**: 1.8m to 3.1m (6ft-10ft 4in).
- **Quality**: ★★★★★
- **Usability**: ★★★★★
- **Performance**: ★★★★★
- **Price guide**: Fruit picker £19.99; telescopic handle ZMV3 £35.99; telescopic handle ZMV200, extends to 2m (6ft 6in), £29.99; and telescopic handle ZMV4, extends to 4m (13ft 4in), £39.99.

**Burgon & Ball Apple Picker**

Uses metal wire teeth to grab and hold the fruit stalk. The fruit holding cage has a removable cushioned foam liner to help prevent fruit bruising.

- **Handle length**: 1.5m (5ft).
- **Quality**: ★★★★★
- **Usability**: ★★★★★
- **Value**: ★★★★★

**Fiskars Quikfit Fruit Picker**

Part of the Quikfit interchangeable tool system. The picking basket has large rounded plastic teeth and you can adjust its angle using a screw nut to make picking and collection easier.

- **Handle length**: 2.25m to 4m (7ft 6in-13ft 4in).
- **Quality**: ★★★★★
- **Usability**: ★★★★★
- **Performance**: ★★★★★
- **Price guide**: Fruit picker £24.99; medium telescopic shaft £40.99; telescopic graphite shaft is also available, extends to 6m (20ft), £47.99.

**Darlac Swop Top Fruit Picking Basket**

Part of the Swoop Top interchangeable tool system. The picking basket has rounded galvanised metal teeth with plastic covers to help prevent fruit bruising.

- **Handle length**: 1.4m to 2.5m (4ft 9in-8ft 4in).
- **Quality**: ★★★★★
- **Usability**: ★★★★★
- **Price guide**: Fruit picking basket £6.95; standard telescopic pole £16; giant telescopic pole also available, extends to 5m (16ft 6in), £33.95.

**Yeoman Telescopic Fruit Picker**

The picking basket has galvanised metal teeth with curved edges.

- **Handle length**: 1.7m to 2.95m (5ft 6in-9ft 10in).
- **Quality**: ★★★★★
- **Usability**: ★★★★★
- **Value**: ★★★★★

**Suppliers**

- **Burgon & Ball**: 0114 233 9826; www.burgonandball.com
- **Darlac**: 01753 547790; www.darlac.com
- **Fiskars**: UK, 0115 927 7335; www.fiskars.com
- **Garden News**: Yeoman 01905 791984; www.yeomangarden.com
- **Gardena**: www.yeomangarden.com
- **Huskvina**: 0844 844 4558; www.gardenia.co.uk
- **Wolf-Garten**: www.wolf-garten.co.uk
- **Yeoman**: www.burgonandball.com

**WIN OUR ‘BEST BUY’ FRUIT PICKER**

We have three of the BEST BUY Wolf-Garten Multi-change Adjustable Fruit Pickers with ZMV3 handles to give away! Send your name and address to Garden News Fruit Picker Giveaway, PO Box 57, Coates, Peterborough PE7 2FE or enter online at www.greatcompetitions.co.uk. Closing date is October 9. Please write ‘do not contact’ if you don’t want to be contacted by us or by carefully selected partner organisations.