

PEACHES

PEACHES In The Home Garden

Horticultural Branch, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture

Generally speaking, peaches are summer fruits, ripening after cherries and apricots but before prunes, pears and apples. Peaches are used as fresh fruit or they may be canned, frozen or dried.

PEACH GROWING AREAS Peaches can be grown successfully in areas of British Columbia where the winter temperatures are not lower than -10°F . Peaches should be planted in areas where spring frosts are rare. Summer temperatures should be high with low relative humidity.

PLANTING SITE Good air drainage is needed. Peaches grow best in a deep sandy loam or silt loam soil. Peach trees are smaller than most other fruit trees and as such lend themselves to small lots. In cooler areas of the province it's best to try and plant in a sheltered spot out of the worst winter winds.

PLANTING DISTANCES An area with a minimum diameter of 15 feet is recommended for each peach tree. Standard peach trees can grow to fill a 20 foot diameter.

VARIETIES Some peach varieties currently recommended in B.C. are as follows (in order of ripening) Early Redhaven, Redhaven, Harbrite, Fairhaven and the V's (Valiant, Vetran). The first two varieties are best as fresh fruit, while the last three varieties are dual purpose, (canned, frozen, dried.) Tests at Summerland Research Station have found Harbrite and the V's to be slightly hardier than the others (by maybe 5°C .)

POLLINATION The recommended varieties are self-fertile and thus do not require cross-pollination with other varieties.

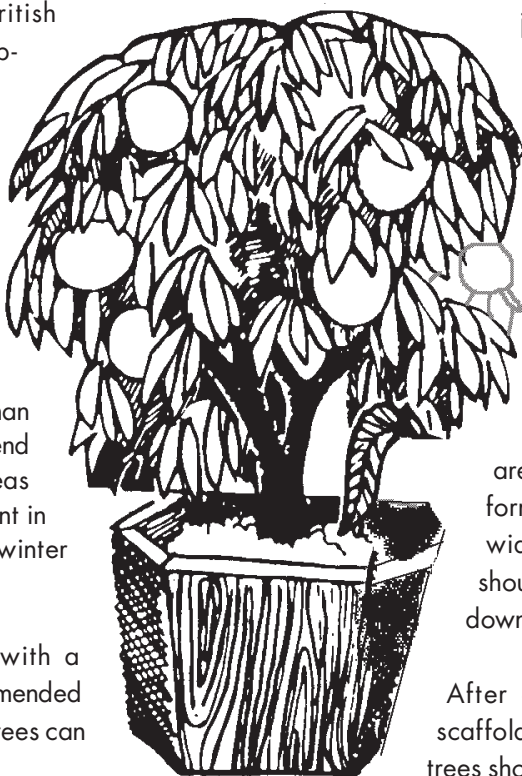
PLANTING One year old nursery trees are easier to transplant than older, larger trees. Planting is best done in the early spring, before the buds open. If the tree is in a peat pot, plant the pot. Dig a hole deep enough and wide enough to accommodate all the roots comfortably. Prune off all broken roots and cut back most of the larger roots. It is best to soak the bare roots in a bucket of fish fertilizer or transplant solution before planting.

Peach trees should be planted so the bud union is just out of the ground. Soak well after refilling the hole.

TRAINING AND PRUNING Peach trees when received from the nursery are usually 3 to 6 foot whips with a profusion of side branches coming from the main stem. As soon as the tree is planted cut the main stem back to a height of 30 to 36 inches above ground level. All of the thin, weak side branches should be removed, but if there are three or four strong side branches that are well spaced around the trunk, retain them to form a framework. Side branches should have wide-angled crotches with the trunk and they should be spaced about 6 to 8 inches apart up and down the trunk.

After about three years, the central leader and scaffold branches are well established. Young peach trees should make 18 inches of new growth annually. The trees should be pruned when they are dormant, and when danger of winter frosts have passed.

Do not prune young peach trees heavily. Thin out crowding branches and remove branches that cross or are growing into the centre of the tree. No peach tree should be allowed to grow more than 14 feet tall. A renewal program of heading back and thinning out of some main branches each year will encourage



development of new fruiting wood lower down in the trees. Only 25% of the previous year's growth is left to bear fruit the next year.

FERTILIZERS Apply enough nitrogen to maintain 18 inches of new growth each year. Other elements such as boron, zinc, magnesium and iron may become deficient at times. These deficiencies are most easily corrected by applications of mineral sprays.

FRUIT THINNING Under normal conditions a peach tree sets much more fruit than the tree can possibly support. Some of this fruit must be removed in order that the fruit that is left will develop to a good size and also so that branches will not break. Thinning keeps the peach tree vigorous and productive.

Fruit should be thinned to about six inches apart. Thinning is done in June.

PESTS AND DISEASES The most common insect pests of peaches are: Peach Twig Borer, Peach Tree Borer, Tarnished Plant Bug, Shot Hole Borer, Earwigs, San Jose Scale, Green Peach Aphid and Peach Silver Mite. The most common diseases of peaches are: Peach Leaf Curl, Powdery Mildew and Coryneum Blight. Control measures for all of these pests and diseases are outlined

in the publication, "Pest Control for the Home Gardener" issued by the British Columbia Department of Agriculture.

HARVESTING The fruit on a peach tree will not all mature and ripen at once. This means that the fruit on peach trees must be examined carefully and the mature fruits are picked while the other peaches are left on the tree to gain size and color. Three to five pickings may be needed, with about four days between each pick.

A peach is mature when it has grown to full size. At that time the peach starts to ripen. The fruit begins to soften and develops juiciness and flavor. The ground color of the skin changes from green to yellow and the pit begins to turn brown. Peaches should be picked when they are firm ripe or soft ripe. Tree ripened peaches have excellent flavor but lose their good smooth texture.

For additional information, contact the nearest office of the British Columbia Department of Agriculture.

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