



# PEACH, PLUM AND NECTARINE

**JUST FRUITS & EXOTICS**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Peaches are the emblem of Southern summer, now joined by nectarines bred for the humid South. Plums were native here, and are a close relative of peaches and nectarines. If you want sweet, juicy peaches, plums or nectarines, take the time to grow your own—store-bought ones are picked green and rarely resemble the real thing. The Louisiana State University program has been a great breeder of delicious and disease resistant varieties and both the University of Georgia and the University of Florida have released many great varieties. All peaches and nectarines are self fertile, so plant one or fill your orchard! But, plums require cross pollination, so leave room for at least two trees.

## **USES IN THE LANDSCAPE**

Each season provides its own kind of beauty with peaches, plums and nectarines. Spring brings billows of fragrant pink to red flowers like cotton candy clouds, followed by months of beautiful fruit changing from green to yellow, gold, peachy red or purple. In fall, leaves turn bright yellow. Standard-sized trees can be used as small shade trees or as part of a fruitful border. When full grown, the willow trees are 12-18 feet tall. Mix peaches, plums and nectarines with smaller fruits such as blueberries, blackberries, figs and pomegranates. Group them along a pathway so you can enjoy them close up!

## **PLANTING AND CULTURE**

### **SITE SELECTION**

Well-drained, sandy loam soils are preferred, but peaches, plums and nectarines will grow on many soil types if good drainage is provided. Peaches, plums and nectarines will grow more vigorously and produce more fruit in full sun. Avoid frost pockets - trees may be damaged by unseasonable frosts.

## **SOIL PREPARATION AND PLANTING**

Peaches, plums and nectarines prefer slightly acid soil (pH 6.0 - 6.8). If you are in doubt about the acidity of your soil, take a soil sample to the Cooperative Extension Agent in your county for a soil test.

Dig a planting hole approximately three times the width of the pot and at the same depth as the root ball. Set that soil aside and mix it 50/50 with either aged mushroom compost, aged manure, or rotted pine bark & aged manure/compost. Remove the plant from the pot, gently loosen the root ball, cut any roots that swirl around the edges of the root ball, and place the tree in the planting hole. To avoid burying too deep, make sure plant is positioned with the top most roots at the soil line. Fill the planting hole with the mix of soil and organic matter; gently tamp it in. Water thoroughly to settle the roots and eliminate air pockets. **Do NOT put fertilizer in the planting hole.** Only apply fertilizer if it is the correct time of year (see Fertilization section below).

If desired, construct a water basin around the base of the tree approximately 36 inches in diameter. Mulch in spring and summer with approximately 4-6 inches of mulch. In spring, we suggest a mix of compost and weed-free hay as mulch. Pull mulch a couple of inches away from the trunk for good air circulation. In summer, use weed-free hay or grass clippings alone.

Spacing for peaches, plums and nectarines depends upon the desired use in the landscape, but in general trees should be at least 20 feet apart. Put plums approximately 20 feet apart for cross pollination. Refer to the Orchard Care Fact Sheet for details of peach, plum and nectarine care throughout the year.

## **FERTILIZATION**

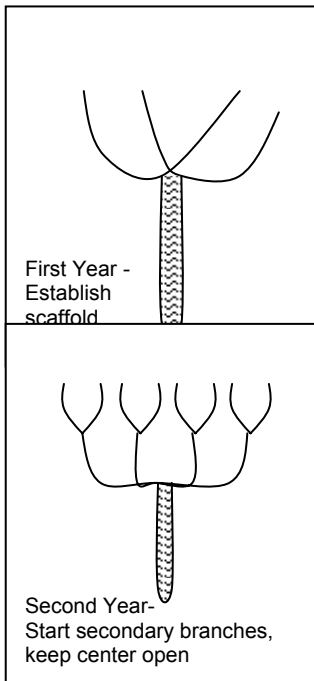
We use and recommend the Espoma line of organic fertilizers. Espoma's Citrus Tone is a good choice for peach, plum or nectarine trees. When not available look for an organic mix that contains an analyst of roughly 5-2-6. Make sure they contain iron, zinc, manganese, magnesium, molybdenum, copper and boron. These minor elements are very important to plants and most soils are low in these elements. Application rates vary according to type and age of plant, so read the instructions on the bag and fertilize accordingly. Spread the fertilizer evenly under the entire canopy of the plant avoiding a 5-inch area around the trunk. Water or rake in. For Zones 8a-10, fertilize 3 times each year in February, May and late July. **Never fertilize after August** as this will promote new growth late in the year which will be subject to freeze damage.

## **WATER**

The first year is a critical time for the establishment of a new peach, plum or nectarine tree. Water thoroughly twice a week on light soils or once a week on clay soils. Soak the entire root system deeply - this usually takes 40-50 minutes. Established trees should receive at least 1 inch of water each week. Water regularly, especially during dry periods. Fruit may drop prematurely if insufficiently irrigated during dry spells.

## PRUNING AND THINNING

Peaches, plums and nectarines in the South are usually pruned to an open center habit.



At planting select 3-4 scaffold branches spaced equally around the trunk and remove other branches flush with the trunk.

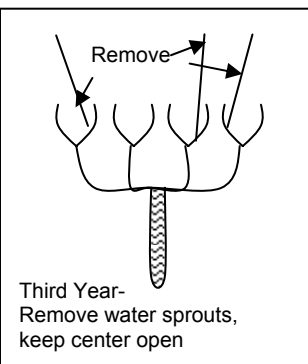
In the second dormant season, top the scaffold limbs approximately 36 inches from the trunk to encourage secondary branching. Remove any strong branches growing into the center. You want the tree to have good air circulation in the interior.

Continue to train peach, plum and nectarine trees during the first 5 years. Pruning should be designed to train the tree outward by removing strong branches growing into the center and removing water sprouts. The tree can be topped out at 7 or 8 foot with mold and hold cuts, which are devigorating heading cuts made into two year old wood. Do this by topping back the main scaffold limb to a weaker outward growing shoot. This will keep the tree at an easy picking height as well as stimulate new growth lower on the tree

Mature trees are pruned during the dormant season. Thin out weak branches and head back long shoots as needed to maintain tree

shape. Remove water sprouts. Remove any dead, damaged or diseased branches when pruning. Use mold and hold cuts to maintain trees to an easy picking height.

To grow the biggest peaches, plums and nectarines, thin small fruit to no more than 1 fruit per 6 inches of branch. We know this hurts, but you'll be rewarded with the sweetest, biggest fruit your tree can produce.



## ORCHARD CARE

Peaches, plums and nectarines need a little help to be productive.

Check with your extension agent for specific recommendations for your area. A few organic suggestions. White peach scale can be controlled by dormant oil sprays at leaf fall and bud break. This is highly recommended as an annual maintenance spray. Brown rot can be prevented by using a wettable sulphur

spray every 2 weeks while fruit is ripening. Pack wood ashes around the base of your tree to fend off peach tree borers. Happy eating!

## VARIETY LIST - FOR MORE VARIETIES GO TO OUR WEBSITE

[WWW.JUSTFRUITSANDEXOTICS.COM](http://WWW.JUSTFRUITSANDEXOTICS.COM)

### PEACHES- ALL PEACHES ARE SELF-POLLINATING.

**FlordaKing:** New University of Florida release ripens in early May. Fruit is 2-2½ inches in diameter. Clingstone, with red-blushed skin and golden-yellow flesh. Zone 8B-9.

**Gulfcrest:** Medium to large-sized clingstone, red skinned with deep yellow flesh. Ripe mid May. Zones 8A-B.

**JuneGold:** Late bloomer great for frost pockets. Large freestone peach that's delicious fresh and also good for canning. Ripe June. Zones 8.

**La Feliciana:** A late-ripening, large, sweet freestone peach. Heavy production. Ripe July. Zones 8A-B.

**Southern Pearl:** Unique white-fleshed peach. Low acid makes this one honey sweet. Semi-cling, ripe mid-June. Bears best in Zone 8B. Zones 8.

**Suwanee:** The "five Fs" peach. Old favorite, firm, freestone peach with deliciously flavorful, finger-licking good flesh. Ripe early to mid June. Zones 8.

**TROPICAL PEACHES: All peaches are self-pollinating.**

**Florda Prince:** Tropical peach bred for 150 chill hours. Medium-sized, deep red-skinned peach with a soft, semi-cling yellow center. Ripe mid-May. Zone 9.

**Tropic Beauty:** A red-skinned semi-freestone peach for 150 chill hours. Delicious! Ripe mid-May. Zone 9.

**Tropic Snow:** White peaches in Tampa! A freestone, low-acid, super-sweet peach. 200 chill hours. Ripe mid-May. Zone 9.

**UFO:** A new saucer peach from the University of Florida. Derived from an old Asian favorite that Chinese emperors loved since they could eat it without dripping delicious juice onto their long beards (really!). 250 chill hours. Ripe May. Zone 9.

**NECTARINES: All nectarines are self-pollinating.**

**Karla Rose:** Large, deep ruby-red skin with a pure white flesh. Low acidity makes the fruit supersweet and rich. Ripe mid-June. Zone 8.

**Suncoast:** Red-blushed skin and golden yellow center. Rich, tangy-sweet flavor. Good nectarine for North Florida, ripe mid-May. Zones 8B-9.

**Sunhome:** Red foliage and low chill make this ornamental a non-fruiting winner in your garden. Zones 8B-9.

**PLUM VARIETIES FOR ZONES 8A-9. All require a pollinator!**

**AU Amber:** An Auburn University release, the AU Amber is a dark red, almost purple plum with yellow flesh and an excellent flavor. Fruit is medium sized, 1 3/4 to 2 inches. Ripens late May to early June. Zone 8.

**Black Ruby:** Reddish black skin with a sweet yellow flesh. Ripens early July. Zone 8.

**Bruce:** One of the toughest. Frost-hardy tree with a semi-dwarf, weeping habit. Sunset orange fruit with a sweet mellow flavor. Ripe late May-June. Improved Methley is the best pollinator. Zone 8B-9.

**Bryon Gold:** A high quality yellow plum! Disease resistant and a great fruit. Large, round bright-yellow plum with a golden-yellow flesh that's deliciously crispy. Ripe late May to June. Improved Methley is the best pollinator. Zone 8A-8B.

**Guthrie:** An improved Chickasaw plum that doesn't sucker and is highly disease resistant. This new variety is yellow-skinned with a tangy, sweet yellow flesh. Fruit is 1 1/2 inches across and makes a fabulous jelly. A good choice for growers who have problems with pollination. Ripens mid-June. Zones 8-9.

**Improved Methley:** Great improvement on an old standby. Purple-skinned with a sweet, soft amber flesh. The best pollinator for most of our plums. Recommended as your first plum! Ripe mid-June. Zone 8.

**Robusto:** New release from Georgia that crosses wild and cultivated plums. Tough and disease resistant, bronze-red skin and sweet red flesh. Use Segundo for pollinator. Ripe early June. Zones 8-9.

**Santa Rosa:** Purple-red skin and yellow-red flesh coupled with a tangy, sweet flavor. Needs a pollinator. Ripens early June. Zone 8.

**Segundo:** New release from Georgia that crosses wild and cultivated plums. Tough and disease resistant with red skin and orange-red flesh. Sweet eating! Use Robusto for pollinator. Ripe mid June. Zones 8-9.

**TROPICAL PLUMS: SUPER LOW CHILL PLUMS FOR ZONES 9-10.**

**Choose any two for cross pollination!**

**Gulf Beauty:** Patented University of Florida release. Richly sweet, small, red fruit. Heavy producer with excellent flavor. 250 chill hours. Requires pollination. Ripen early May.

**Gulf Blaze:** Another patented University of Florida release. Medium-sized, deep ruby-red skin with a yellow-red flesh. Excellent flavor. 250 chill hours. Requires pollination. Ripen early to mid May.

**Gulf Rose:** Still another patented University of Florida release. Medium size, sweet, red fruit with a rich flavor. Excellent producer. 250 chill hours. Requires pollination. Ripen early May.