

Urban Harvest
Gardening for good.

Peaches

Category:	Temperate; deciduous
Hardiness:	Withstands normal freezes
Fruit Family:	Stone fruit
Light:	Full sun
Size:	12'-15'H x 10'-12'W average, may be pruned to desired HxW
Soil:	Well-drained, will not tolerate standing water
Planting:	Plant during dormancy in Jan – Feb

Care of Peach Trees

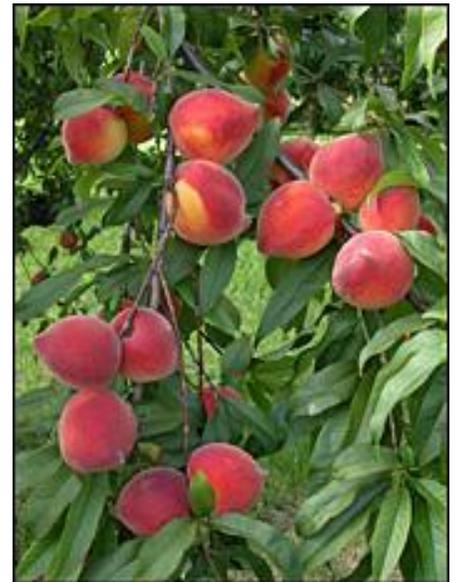
Planting: Peaches should be planted 8' to 10' from the nearest tree to allow for the limb spread. It can be planted closer, but there will be very little room between trees.

Select a planting area that is well-drained or create a raised planting bed. Remove all vegetation within a minimum three-foot diameter circle.

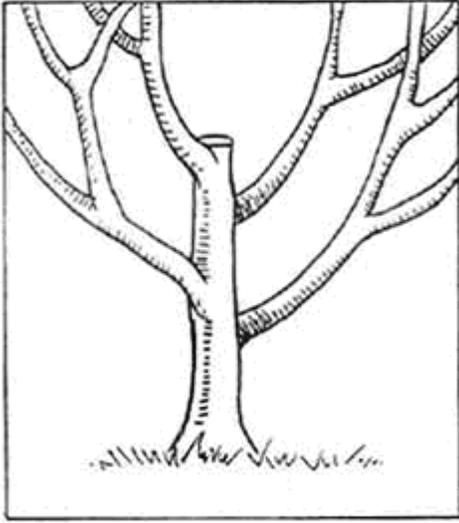
Locate the root flare; the point where the trunk transitions to the roots. Remove any nursery soil above this point, making sure the roots are still covered. Trim any roots that appear to be circling the root ball and any broken or clearly dead roots. Measure the depth of the resulting root ball.

Dig a hole that is wide and deep enough to easily accommodate the root ball. The sides of the hole should be tapered outward, not straight down (visualize a wok, not a stock pot) with the widest point at the top of the hole. The deepest point of the hole should be no deeper than your measurement of the root ball. This will allow the root flare to sit at the soil level and insures that the graft scar (located several inches about the root flare) will always be several inches above the soil level.

Place the root ball in the prepared hole. Check for straightness. Position the lowest branch you have decided to keep facing southwest. Backfill $\frac{1}{2}$ of the depth with existing soil – no amendments should be added during planting. Water well and allow it to drain. Fill the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ of the depth. Tamp the soil, but do not pack hard. Water in well and water every day for a few days unless it rains. A mulch of composted native mulch or rotted leaves is highly recommended. Do not use bark mulch.



Pruning: Peach trees need to be pruned to get sunlight onto all branches. Develop a modified central-leader scaffold with upward-sloping limbs 45° to 60° from horizontal, well-spaced around the trunk horizontally and vertically. This builds a strong infrastructure for holding the fruit and helps give



sunlight access to lower limbs. Remove crossing branches and remove or head back interior branches that go up vertically from the scaffold to increase light penetration. Fruit trees will produce little if any fruit on branches growing downward. These downward hangers should be removed.

One of the main goals of pruning peaches is to encourage the production of new fruiting wood. In winter, head each branch that grew last summer back to fat, three headed buds halfway to one-third way down the stem. As your tree gets taller, it may get too tall to pick or prune. To prevent this, thin the leading stalk (the trunk) back to a weak upward angled side branch each winter, and thin all other branches back to at least a foot below this side branch. Peaches may also be pruned to the “open vase” method.

Production: Peaches will begin to produce in year two or three from planting. If there is fruit the year after planting, pick it off in order to allow all energy go into root development and tree growth. Thin peaches when they are about 1” in diameter in order to develop larger, tastier fruits. Leave 5” – 6” between fruits along the branches.

Watering: All fruit trees should get consistent water in the first few years. Watering can come from rain or a hose. During the first year, if the soil under the mulch is dry, provide the tree with about 7 gallons of water per week, preferably once a week. Water slowly. This can be a little more than 3 minutes with a $\frac{1}{2}$ ” hose and 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes with a $\frac{5}{8}$ ” hose. Remember to account for rainfall when determining how much to water with a hose.

Fertilizing: We recommend an organic program for fruit trees in the home landscape. For a small number of trees, use a slow release organic fertilizer, available at local independent nurseries. If you have a large number of trees, or a small number of trees and a limited budget, you can use cottonseed meal, available at nurseries and feed stores. Fertilizers should be broadcast under the entire canopy space of the tree. An organic mulch of compost and native mulch, or well-rotted leaves should be maintained at all times as part of your nutrition program.

Slow release organic fertilizer: 1st year – $\frac{1}{2}$ cup; 2nd & 3rd years – 3 pounds; subsequent years - 20 to 40 pounds per 1000 square feet. Apply every 3 – 4 months.

Cottonseed meal: 1st year – 1.5 cups; 2nd year – 3 cups; 3rd year – 6 cups; mature trees – 3 to 6 quarts per inch of trunk measured at the base. Apply in February and May.

Harvesting: Ripe peaches will vary in color depending on the variety. White-fleshed varieties will have a white to pale cream skin with varying orange to red blushes. Yellow-fleshed varieties will be more

deeply blushed with orange and red over most of their skin. Peaches do not continue ripening once they are harvested. Do not rush this process.

Begin testing for ripeness when there is less than 25% greenish tint to the skin. Cradle the fruit in your hand. Gently press the flat of your thumb near the stem end of the fruit. If it yields slightly to your gentle pressure it is probably ripe. Be careful not to bruise the fruit while testing. Lift the fruit and twist gently on the fruit stem. If it is truly ripe, it will separate easily. If it resists, it is not quite ripe. Try again in a day or two. Peaches will not all ripen at once and should be harvested daily.

Pests: Peach fruit can be infested with Plum Curculio. Check for a small half-moon cut on the fruit. Pull off and dispose of all affected fruit. Early peaches may avoid Plum Curculio, so it might not be a problem, but be diligent in pulling off fruit that is infected. An organic method to protect from Plum Curculio is to spray with Surround® WP, a non-toxic wettable powder that is sprayed on when the fruit is very small. It coats the fruit and prevents Plum Curculio from getting in.

Winter Protection: Winter protection is not necessary for peaches. In fact, they need to acquire a specific number of chill hours in order to break dormancy and produce blooms & fruit. If the tree has open blooms in late winter/early spring, and temperatures are predicted to fall below 26° F, you may cover the tree with a cloth “tent”. It is not necessary to wrap the tree. Just drape the cloth to prevent frost from settling directly on the blossoms. Use clothespins or twine to secure the tent to the branch tips. Remove immediately after the danger has passed.



Varieties of Peaches for the 2016 Sale

Donut, Eva's Pride, MayPride, MidPride, Red Baron, Tex King, Tropic Snow, Multi-graft, Peach-Nectarine Multi-graft

Varieties of Peaches for Southeast Texas

Bonanza Dwarf: A true genetic dwarf that will only reach 5' - 6' in height at maturity. Medium to large sized fruits are yellow with a red blush. Sweet, juicy, yellow-fleshed freestone. It's also an attractive ornamental tree, due to the very large, lush green leaves and cute, dwarf appearance. Makes a great container plant. Ripens mid-to-late June. Self-fruitful. **250 chill hours**

Donut (Stark Saturn): Distinctive flat, freestone peaches with tender, white flesh with a mild, sweet flavor. Trees bear heavy crops of peaches that measure 2¼" - 2¾" in diameter. Disease resistant to bacterial leafspot. Self-fruitful. **200 – 300 chill hours**

Eva's Pride: Large, firm, delicious yellow freestone. Ripens midway between MayPride & MidPride. Self-fruitful. **100 - 200 chill hours**

MayPride: Delicious fruit; larger than other early peaches. The best low chill peach for its season. Ripens in May before Plum Curculio gets to the fruit. Large showy, pink blossoms. Self-fruitful. **175 - 200 chill hours**

MidPride: Good tree vigor. Best yellow freestone for warm winter climate of Houston. Yellow-orange fruit with distinctive red-striping. Ripens mid to late June. Self-fruitful. **250 chill hours**

Red Baron: Double, coral-red, frilled flowers that often bloom at the same time as azaleas for an ornamental show. Wonderful flavor, rated a 10 in taste tests; freestone. Ripens mid-June to mid-July. Self-fruitful. **250-300 chill hours**

Tex King: Large, red-skinned, clingstone peach with firm, yellow flesh. A good canning peach. Self-fertile. **400 chill hours**

Tropic Snow Peach: Excellent tasting (rated 10) white-fleshed freestone. Pale yellow skin with red blush. Large fruit ripens in May before Plum Curculio gets fruit. Self-fruitful. **150-200 chill hours**

Multi-grafted Peaches: More than one variety is grafted onto each rootstock. These specimens are perfect for smaller gardens where a variety of flavors and an extended harvest season is desired. They are also delightfully ornamental when in bloom and can easily be worked into an existing perennial border as well as the orchard. The varieties are labeled on each tree.