



## Peaches and Nectarines in Your Garden Brochure

GROWING AREAS: Peaches and nectarines can be grown successfully in the Southern Interior where the winter temperatures are not lower than -10 F (-24C).

On an average of once every 8 years, winter temperatures can fall well below this, resulting in crop loss and serious damage to the trees. Sometimes peach and nectarine trees are grown underneath roof overhangs on the south wall of a house to give some winter protection. Peaches and nectarines should be planted in areas where spring frosts are rare. Summer temperatures should be high with low relative humidity. Peaches and nectarines are hardy in Zone 6, marginal in Zone 5 and very risky in Zone 4.

### PLANTING SITE

Good air drainage is needed. Peaches and nectarines grow best in a deep sandy loam or silt loam soil. Peach and nectarine trees are smaller than most other fruit trees and as such lend themselves to small lots. An area with a minimum diameter 15 ft. (4.6 meters) is recommended for each tree.

### VARIETIES

## Peaches

EARLY REDHAVEN	Ripens 10 days before Redhaven. Semi-clingstone. Bright red skin color. Satisfactory size
REDHAVEN	Ripens mid-August. Excellent red color, firm flesh, good size, heavy cropper. Free-stone when fully ripe.
FAIRHAVEN	Ripens in the third week of August. Yellow fruit with a red blush, firm flesh, freestone, very productive.
GLOHAVEN	Dark red skin, firm flesh, freestone, good size. Ripens in the last week of August.
CRESTHAVEN	Gold with a red blush, medium to large, good quality, freestone. Ripens mid-September.
VETERAN	Good bud and tree hardiness. Heavy production. Soft flesh, freestone, lacks red skin color. Ripens first week of September.
HARBRITE	From the Harrow Research Station in Ontario. Ripens third week of August. Bright red blush, freestone, medium size. Hardier than Redhaven.
CANADIAN HARMONY	Also from the Harrow Research Station in Ontario. Ripens third week of August. Medium to large, dark red blush, freestone.
RARITAN ROSE	Finally the garden centers can offer a white fleshed peach. Light red skin color. Large freestone. Very sweet and aromatic. Tree is winter hardy.
HARROW DIAMOND	Developed at the Harrow Research Station in Ontario along with Canadian Harmony and Harbrite. Winter hardy, red skin, freestone. High quality. Relatively new in BC.
DWARF VARIETY	Standard peaches can be kept as small trees anywhere from 8-12 feet tall. Genetic dwarf peach trees come in two sizes namely 3-4 feet tall and 6 feet tall.

## Nectarines

CRIMSON GOLD	Ripens second week of August. Fruit is small to medium size. Deep crimson skin, soft flesh. The earliest ripening nectarine.
REDGOLD	Ripens second week of September. Crimson blush, freestone, firm, good flavor. The most suitable nectarine for the Okanagan.
FIREBRITE	A relatively new variety. Bright, waxy, cherry red skin colour. Flesh is yellow, firm and good quality. Prone to split stones. The tree is moderately vigorous and moderately productive.

### POLLINATION

All peaches are self-fertile except J.H. Hale.

### PLANTING

Select a well grown one or two year old tree from the nursery. Two year trees should have at least four or five well-spaced branches with a good root system. The usual practice is to plant early in the spring, but planting can be completed in the fall when weather conditions are good and the soil is moist. Prepare a hole slightly larger than the root spread. Trim off any broken roots before planting. If the tree is in a plastic pot, remove the pot. If it comes in a fiber pot, you can slit the sides and plant with the pot or remove the pot. Sprinkle a handful of bone meal (phosphorous) in the bottom of the hole to help the root system get established. Place the tree in the hole. Mix in some peat moss or compost with the planting soil. Replace the soil in the hole, treading the soil firmly around the roots to ensure that the tree is securely anchored in the ground. Give the tree a good watering. An area of about 4 ft. in diameter (1.2 meters) should be kept free of weeds or lawn grass during the early stages of growth. Organic or plastic mulches can also be used to suppress weed growth around the tree.

### PRUNING

At planting time, cut the one year tree back to a height of 33-36 " (82.5-90 cm). If a two year old tree is planted, reduce the branches to four well-spaced shoots and shorten each by one-third, weak side branches should be removed. Peach trees and nectarine trees are usually grown as open center trees with the central leader removed. Aim to develop a framework of well spaced branches that are capable of bearing heavy crops without breaking. After about three years the scaffold branches are well established. Young trees should make 18 inches (46 cm) of new growth annually. Mature trees should have 16 " (40-45 cm) of new growth. Peaches and nectarines do not produce fruit on fruit spurs. The fruit is produced on one year old wood. In order to have lots of new growth for next year's crop, the trees are pruned harder than other types of fruit trees, with lots of heading cuts. No peach tree should be allowed to grow more than 14 ' tall (4.3 meters). Many commercial peach and nectarine growers keep their trees at about 10' tall (3 meters). 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 75% of the previous year's growth is left to bear fruit the next year.

## SOIL & FERTILIZER

Soils in the Southern Interior are chronically low in organic matter and nitrogen. Minor elements such as magnesium, boron, and zinc may be low as well. If good weed control is practised, no fertilizer should be required for the first two or three years. When the tree starts to crop, apply one ounce (28 grams) of a complete fertilizer such as 12-16-12 (which contains minor elements) per square yard (0.8 sq. meters) in the fall. Nutrients can also be applied as foliar sprays in early summer. Organic growers should use approved sources of organic nutrients.

## FRUIT THINNING

Under normal conditions peach and nectarine trees set more fruit than the tree can possibly support. Some of the fruit must be removed in order that the fruit that is left will develop to a good size and also that branches will not break. Thinning keeps the peach tree vigorous and productive. Fruit should be thinned to about six inches apart (15 cm). Thinning is done in June.

## HARVESTING

The fruit on peach and nectarine trees will not all mature and ripen at once. This means that the fruit on the trees must be examined carefully and the mature fruits are picked while the other fruit 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 fully mature when it has grown to full size. At that time the fruit starts to ripen. The fruit begins to soften and develop juiciness and flavor. The ground color of the skin changes from green to yellow and the pit begins to turn brown. The fruit should be picked when they are firm ripe or soft ripe. Tree ripened peaches and nectarines have excellent flavor but lose their good smooth texture.

## PESTS & DISEASES

The most common pests of peaches and nectarines are: Peach Twig Borer, Peach Tree Borer, Lygus Bug, Earwigs, and Green Peach Aphids. The most common diseases are: Peach Left Curl, Coryneum Blight, and Brown Rot. Check the "Gardeners Guide to Fruit Tree Sprays" published by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food, or consult the B.C.M.A.F. publication "Pest Control For The Home and Garden." Organic gardeners should use accepted organic control methods.

*Thanks to John Price, P.Ag., Horticulturist*