

Peaches

Peaches are among the most challenging and rewarding fruits to grow. They are self-fertile and do not require a second variety for pollination. Give each tree 20-25 feet of space. Dr. Larry Stein of Texas Cooperative Extension says “If you can get 15 years from a peach tree, you are doing well,” so it pays to prepare the soil correctly and pamper peach trees from the start. Consult our handout *Planting & Maintenance Guide for Fruits, Nuts, & Berries* for further instructions.

Prune peaches according to the **open center** method: **At Planting:** Cut main stem back to a height of 24” to 30”. If there are any branches that are suitable for scaffold branches (strong, evenly-spaced, lateral branches at wide angles to main stem), cut these back leaving 2 – 3 buds on each. If not, cut all branches back, leaving only the main stem. Allow tree to grow freely the first year. **2nd & 3rd Winters:** In January to mid-February, select 3-4 evenly-spaced scaffold branches, if you haven’t done so already. Head back (prune the tips of) these to 24” from the trunk. Remove any growth arising on the scaffold branches within 6” of the trunk. All branches on the trunk above or below the scaffold branches should be removed. Remove all branches growing down, towards the center, vertically, or at narrow angles. **Subsequent Winters:** Long, slender branches should be headed back each winter to induce further branching. Continue removing branches growing down, towards the center, or at narrow angles. Consult a reputable, current book or university website for more complete pruning information.

It takes about 4 years for a peach tree to mature and produce a significant harvest. Before the peaches reach 1/2” in diameter, thin the fruit so that they are 6” apart. This is *essential* for the health of the tree, and it encourages larger, more flavorful fruit. Proper thinning often removes 70-80% of the fruit.

Peach Varieties for Central Texas (chilling hours/stone or pit adherence to flesh) – Size of fruit; Ripening time; Fruit quality & flavor; Skin color; Other qualities & information.

Clingstone peaches are great for canning, pickling, and fresh eating, but not typically for freezing or cooking. Freestone varieties readily separate from the pit, making them much easier to clean and manage. Peaches harvested later in the season are higher in natural sugars. Choose a variety with high to very high firmness for cooking. The firmer, late season peaches will tend to have higher pectin levels, useful in preparation of jams, jellies, and fruit preserves.

Dixieland (750/free) – Large; Mid-late July; Yellow flesh; Red blush; Great flavor; Juicy; “Pointed” bottom.

FlordaCrest (350/semi-cling) – Small-medium; Mid-late April; Yellow flesh; Red-blushed skin; From U of Florida.

FlordaKing (450/cling) Large; Mid-May; Golden yellow flesh; Red-blushed skin; Sweet.

Flordaprince (100–150/cling) Small; Mid-late April; Firm yellow flesh; Deep red-blushed skin.

Harvester (700 – 750/semi-free) Medium-large; Mid-late June; Firm, finely-textured yellow flesh with acidic, excellent flavor; Fiery red skin; Resistant to bacterial leaf spot; Uniform ripening

June Gold (650/cling) Large; Late May-early June; Yellow flesh with melting texture; Heavy red blushed skin; Great for canning.

La Feliciano (550/free) Large; Late June-early July; Firm, yellow, sweet tangy flavor & great texture; Red-blushed skin; Very heavy producer; Tolerant of bacteriosis; From Louisiana.

Redskin (750/free) Large; Mid-July; Firm, yellow flesh with great flavor; Solid red skin; Excellent fresh, shipping, and canning; Resistant to bacteriosis.

TexPrince (500–550/free) Large; Early to mid-June; Sweet, rich, slightly acidic yellow flesh; Attractive yellow-orange skin with red blush; Moderately resistant to bacterial leaf spot; Bred at Texas A&M.

TexKing (450/cling) Large; Early to mid-May; Firm, sweet, rich, slightly acidic yellow flesh; Attractive yellow skin with red blush; Moderately resistant to bacterial leaf spot; Bred at Texas A&M.

Texstar (650/free) Medium-large; Late May-early June; Firm and flavorful fruit; Yellow skin with slight blush; From Texas A&M.