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How to Grow Peaches: The Complete Guide to Peach Trees



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Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Peaches

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

Last Updated: September 18, 2024



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Juicy peaches picked at their peak are pure perfection! From planting peach trees and spring pinching to summer pruning and fall harvesting, here is how to grow peaches!

About Peaches

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The trick to growing peaches is to choose a type that will fit your climate. Peach trees can be grown in USDA Zones 4 to 10, but do especially well in Zones 6 to 8 ([learn more about plant hardiness zones](#)). If you live in one of these latter zones, you can focus on choosing a variety based on its flavor and harvest time. If you live in colder regions, some varieties are more cold-tolerant, which you should choose instead.

Read Next

- [How to Grow Plums: The Complete Guide](#)
- [How to Grow Apples and Apple Trees: The Complete Guide](#)
- [Stone Fruit: How to Grow Your Own](#)

PLANTING

sun all day long. The morning sun is especially crucial because it helps to dry morning dew off the fruit and keeps it from rotting. Be sure to avoid planting in low areas, too, as cold air and frost can more easily settle there and affect the quality of your peaches.

Choose a site with well-drained, moderately fertile soil. Peach trees won't do well in areas where the soil is compacted or remains constantly wet. [Soil pH](#) should be on the slightly-acidic side, between 6 and 6.5.

When to Plant Peach Trees

- Peach trees should be planted while they are dormant—typically in late winter or early spring (depending on climate).
 - In regions where the ground freezes during winter, hold off on planting until the soil has thawed and the ground is no longer waterlogged from snowmelt or heavy spring rains.
- It's best to plant the trees the same day that you get them (if possible) to reduce stress on the seedling or sapling. Potted trees can tolerate not being planted for a little while, but bare-root trees should be planted as soon as possible.

tend not to be as productive or vigorous overall.

How to Plant Peach Trees

- Dig a hole that is a few inches deeper and wider than the spread of the roots. Set the tree on top of a small mound of soil in the middle of the hole. Be sure to spread the roots away from the trunk without excessively bending them.
- For container-grown trees, remove the plant from its pot and remove any circling roots by laying the root ball on its side and using clean shears to cut through the offending roots. (Keep root pruning to a minimum, overall.)
- For grafted trees, position the inside of the curve of the graft union away from the sun when planting.
 - **Tip:** Especially for dwarf or semi-dwarf grafted trees, the graft union must be 2 to 3 inches above the soil surface. If it's any lower, the grafted tree (called the scion) may start to put out its own roots and grow into a standard-size tree.
- Do not fertilize at the time of planting.
- If you are planting standard-size trees, space them 15 to 20 feet apart. Space

- Most types of peach trees are self-fertile, so planting one tree is all that's needed for fruit production.



Homegrown, juicy peaches are within your reach!

[Check out our video to learn more about how to plant a bare-rooted fruit tree.](#)

An Alternative Planting Method

If your circumstances are suitable, you might want to try a technique practiced in England. It involves planting a peach tree—ideally a dwarf variety—on the south side of the home (or other structure), directly under the eaves. Over time, the gardener prunes and trains the peach tree to [espalier](#) in a fan shape against or very near to the wall of the house.

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Plastic sheeting is attached to the eaves and draped to cover but not touch the tree, similar to a lean-to tent. This keeps the tree dry in winter, and the tree enjoys the warmth of the sun—directly and reflected off the house—year-round. The plastic should be opened or lifted during bloom time to welcome pollinating insects and on hot, sunny days to ventilate the tree and prevent foliage burn.

GROWING

- About 4 to 6 weeks after the tree blooms, thin the fruit so that they are 6 to 8 inches apart on the branch. If too much fruit is left on the tree, it is likely to be smaller and subpar. Thinning the fruit ensures that the tree will focus energy on the remaining fruit.
- Prune and fertilize to encourage 10 to 18 inches of new growth during spring and summer.

— • • • —

- About 6 weeks after planting, fertilize young trees with a balanced (10-10-10) fertilizer.
 - **Tip:** Apply fertilizer in a circle around the tree, but keep it at least 18 inches away from the trunk. This encourages the roots to spread outward, rather than in on themselves.
- During the second year, add 3/4 pounds of nitrogen fertilizer once in the spring and once in the early summer.
- After the third year, add about 1 pound of nitrogen fertilizer per year to the mature trees in the spring.
- To help make the tree hardier, do not fertilize it within 2 months of the first fall frost date or while the fruit is maturing. Fertilizer should only be applied between spring and mid-summer.

Pinching Peach Trees in Spring

In the spring (often April), pinch your off the tips of new branches so the tree will make side branches and be shaped nicely, and your fruit will be within reach. Otherwise, the branches will keep growing long and straight without side branching.

of a new branch just above a bud. Choose buds a distance of 1 to 2 feet from where the branch begins from a larger branch. Then your tree will grow out buds just below the pinched bud to make side branches.

Pruning Peach Trees in Summer

Pruning in the summer can NOT be avoided. If left unpruned, peach trees weaken, may become diseased, and bear less fruit year after year. Peaches bloom and bear fruit on second-year wood; therefore, the trees need to make good growth each spring and summer for lots of fruit!

The goal is to keep peach trees small, no more than six to ten feet tall. In general, you will be

- 1) cutting out any branches at the top from getting too high so the fruit is reachable and
- 2) cutting outside branches so that enough light is getting to lower branches for flower and fruit development.

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You want a globe or **open center shape**.

- In the summer of the first year, cut the vigorous shoots that form on the *top of the tree* by two or three buds so the tree doesn't grow too tall. Then, remove some branches from the center. Look for three wide-angled branches, spaced equally apart, then cut back any other branches so that these three are the main branches.
- In the early summer of the second year, cut back the branches in the middle of the tree to short stubs and prune any shoots developing below the three main branches. After the third year, remove any shoots in the center of the tree to keep its shape.

You may need to prune a couple of times a summer. The first time you prune is when the tree has put on about two feet of new branches. This can happen as early as May, or it may not even happen at all (in which case you don't need to prune, or it may harm the

NOTE: Summer pruning is NOT the time for any dramatic cutting. This is done in late winter when the tree is dormant.

Types

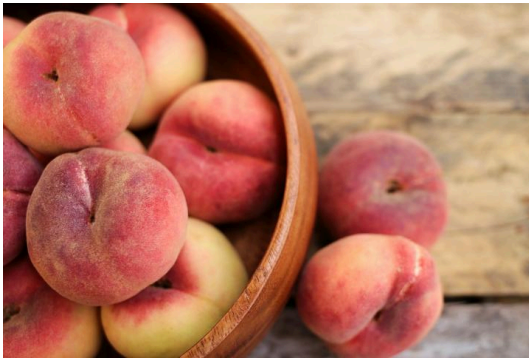
- **‘Redhaven’**, which is the standard and most popular choice. These peaches are medium-size, but can be small if the tree is not properly thinned. Its skin is tough and firm and red in color.
- **‘Reliance’**, which is a hardy variety. It produces small and soft fruits.
- **‘Harmony’** (**‘Canadian Harmony’**), which is winter hardy and moderately resistant to bacterial leaf spot. It produces medium to large fruit and freezes well.
- Some zone favorites are:

Zone	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Variety	Hale	Madison	Saturn	Contender	Frost	Topaz	Florida Beauty

HARVESTING

- Peaches are harvested when they are fully ripe from late June through July and August.

- Though this timing depends on what type of peach variety, you can generally go by the color of the fruit. When peaches are fully ripe, the ground color of the fruit changes from green to completely yellow. No green should be left on the fruit. They should come off the tree with only a slight twist. The fruits found on the top and outside of the tree usually ripen first.
- Be careful when picking your peaches because some varieties bruise very easily.
- **Tip:** Peaches ripen faster in a closed paper bag at room temperature.



These look ready for your [favorite Peach Cobbler](#) recipe!

How to Store Peaches

- You can store peaches in the refrigerator in a plastic bag. They should keep for about 5 days.
- You can also make use of fresh peaches by making [peach jam](#) or [peach butter](#).
- Peaches can also be canned or frozen

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WIT AND WISDOM

- “An apple is an excellent thing – until you have tried a peach” – George du Maurier

brought to the Western world
through Iran.

- Test buds of peaches and other sensitive fruits for freeze damage. Bring in a few twigs cut from the trees and place them in a vase of water. If the twigs bloom in a week or two, expect blossoms in the spring and a crop the following fall.
- Peach blossoms are the state flower of Delaware.

RECIPES

BLACKBERRY-PEACH COBBLER

PEACH COBBLER

PEACH-GLAZED CHICKEN

**PEACH OR STRAWBERRY VANILLA
ICE CREAM**

PEACH JAM

**EASY PEACH STRUDEL WITH PHYLLO
DOUGH**

FRUIT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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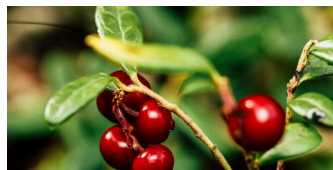
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COMMENTS

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Nancy (not verified) 1 year 11 months ago

We have a lively spot at our yard here (in Boston)

ting. Could we still grow peaches there? We're thinking about trying to plant a windbreak but worry we can't cut off enough wind without cutting off too much sun. Ideas?

REPLY

Paula S. (not verified) 2 years 1 month ago

Growing up on Long Island, we had a peach tree in a section of the yard in front of the living room window. It was a lovely shaped tree that my father tended with great care. And boy, oh, boy, did we get a bumper crop; and it was my job to pick them! Not peaches. A bumper crop of Japanese beetles!

REPLY

Jackie Smith (not verified) 2 years 1 month ago

Which peach is cling free? Can I make a dwarf out of a normal size tree?

We live in Georgia 45 miles southeast from Savannah. This past winter my lemon trees got hit with 19* for several days. and it is now March 2023 and still no buds leafs or blooms. My navel orange and Satsuma have new leaves and blooms. Are my lemons dead? One is a Meyers 7 years and the other

[REPLY](#)

Patricia Lane (not verified) 1 year 11 months ago

I lucked out and found some peach-lings from some of my grandmother's old peaches she planted centuries ago. I planted one three years ago and I about died! They are white peaches and hardy and extremely tough trees! It been hectic weather here in Marietta but it survived through freezes, frosts, drought, dogs, kids, squirrels and the smog! I have more babies if ur interested, I'm always interested in sharing with a fellow greenthumb.

[REPLY](#)

Melinda Cook (not verified) 1 month 2 weeks ago

Oh yes! My goodness, if the offer is still open I'd love to have some of that tree!

[REPLY](#)

I would love to get a white peach tree in
my yard I'm in Ringgold Georgia

REPLY

Cindy Clites (not verified) 9 months 1
week ago

Wow!!! Just wow!!! In behalf of your great
grandmother-I stand in awe of you!!! Have
fun, enjoy and think of her every day!!!
You are a lucky smart woman!!!!

REPLY

Carol (not verified) 9 months 1 week ago

How lovely. I wish I live in South Carolina
and have a struggle with our one peach
tree. Your variety must be a good one. I
wish I lived closer to get a sapling from
you.

Happy gardening!

REPLY

Ron McQueen (not verified) 11 months
2 weeks ago

[REPLY](#)**The Editors** 2 years 1 month ago

The University of Georgia has a great list of peach varieties that includes whether they're cling- or freestone: [Growing Peaches at Home](#)

As for dwarf trees: Peach trees generally consist of one variety selected for its fruit that is grafted onto a different variety of rootstock. The rootstock is what makes the tree dwarf, semi-dwarf, or standard. So, while you could keep a normal size tree pruned smaller, it won't be a true dwarf and it will be a constant pruning battle!

Unfortunately, lemons are one of the most cold-tender citruses; 19F might have been too cold for them. Keep a close eye on them this spring to see if they produce new foliage—it could be that some of the branches just died back but the main trunk survived.

[REPLY](#)

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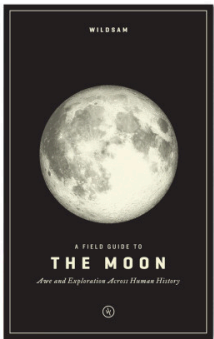
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