



Peaches



Social Sciences

The peach was first domesticated and cultivated in China as early as 6000 BCE. There are archaeological records showing that they had already arrived in Japan and India by 2000 BCE. They continued their spread around the world and were well known in the Roman Empire by the first century CE. The peach was brought to the Americas by Spanish explorers in the 16th century. For the next 200 years, peaches were mostly cultivated by the Indigenous people who spread them both North and West across the continent. American farmers did not begin commercial production until the 19th century in Maryland, Delaware, Georgia, South Carolina, and finally Virginia. Georgia has the nickname “The Peach State” despite it not being first or even second in peach production and the peach contributing far less than 1% of the state's agricultural production. It is the state fruit of both Georgia and South Carolina. The peach is also the official tree fruit of Alabama. The peach flower is the official state flower of Delaware, and peach pie is the state dessert! But none of those states grow more peaches than California. China is the top peach producer in the world, growing 65% of the world's peaches.

El durazno means peach in Spanish.

Botany

Peaches have the scientific name *Prunus persica*. They were given the species name “persica” because people used to think they originated in Persia. The genus *Prunus* also contains plums, apricots, cherries and almonds. All these fruits and nuts are similar because they grow on deciduous trees, need a certain amount of cold during the dormant season to fruit properly, and they prefer dry, temperate climates.



Nutrition

Peaches contain decent amounts of Vitamin A and C, with studies showing the amount of these nutrients is higher in tree ripened fruit. They are also a good source of fiber.

Growing Tips

Peaches come in a variety of cultivated varieties and knowing your growing conditions is important before choosing a cultivar. They each need a certain amount of Winter chill in order to set fruit, and have differing levels of susceptibility to common fungal diseases. But if you choose the right variety, peach trees can be a wonderful addition to the Sonoma County garden.

Care & Maintenance

Peach trees require year-round care. They require yearly dormant season pruning in order to fruit well each season. Many people also spray them during the dormant season with kaolin clay or a copper-based fungicide in order to help the trees against peach leaf curl, a very common fungal disease. After the tree flowers and sets fruit it is very likely you will need to thin some of the fruit off the tree in order to grow nice sized fruit without breaking branches off your tree. You may still need to be prepared with branch props if your tree has a heavy fruit load. Peach trees don't require a lot of water. In fact, once established it is possible to dry farm peaches if your climate and soil type is conducive.

Harvesting

Peaches are climacteric fruits and continue to ripen after being picked from the tree. This can alleviate some stress in knowing when to pick. You can begin picking as soon as the fruit has achieved its full color and ripen it off the tree. However, fruit that is allowed to ripen on the tree will have a higher nutritional value. And there is nothing like biting into a soft, juicy peach right off the tree!

Fun Fact

Peaches and nectarines are the same species. Nectarines have just been bred to be "fuzzless." All of the botanical, nutrition and growing information is the same for both peaches and nectarines so we will default to using the term peaches.