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Growing Peach Trees

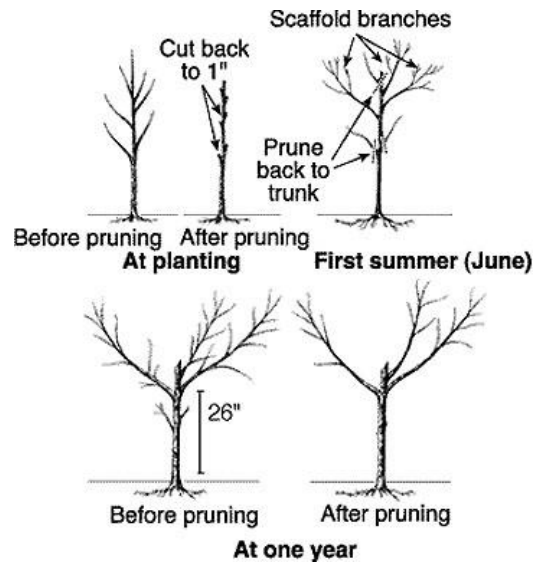
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Steps for Success!



Site Selection, Soil Preparation, and Planting Peaches or nectarines require full sunlight and should not receive shade from buildings or tall trees. If possible, select a site with a high elevation so that cold air can drain away from the tree on a cold night during bloom. The best site will have well drained sandy loam type soil. Peach or nectarine tree roots or rootstocks will not tolerate soils where water remains on or near the surface for more than one hour after a heavy rain.

Training and Pruning The open center system is recommended for peach and nectarine trees for maximum sunlight exposure, maximum yield, and best quality. All pruning should be done in the winter when the tree is dormant. Pruning and training should be done in the year of planting and every year after to develop a strong, well balanced framework. During the first year, remove diseased, broken, and low-hanging limbs. Then remove vigorous upright shoots that may have developed on the inside of the main scaffolds and if left could shade the center. During the second and third years, remove low-hanging, broken, and/or diseased limbs. To maintain the open vase, remove any vigorous upright shoots developing on the inside of the tree, leaving the smaller shoots for fruit production. Finally, prune the vigorous upright limbs on the scaffolds by cutting them back to an outward growing shoot.



Increase Fruit Size through Thinning In years without frost and freeze damage, more peaches will set than the tree can support and fruit must be thinned. Approximately three to four weeks after bloom or when the largest fruit are as large as a quarter, fruits should be removed by hand so that the remaining peaches are spaced about every 8 inches. Fruit thinning will allow the remaining fruits to develop optimum size, shape, and color, and prevent depletion of the tree.

Fertilizer Apply 1/2 pound of 10-10-10 fertilizer or its equivalent 7 to 10 days after planting and the same amount again 40 days after planting. Broadcast the fertilizer evenly, 8 to 12 inches away from the trunk. In the second and third years after planting, the tree should receive 3/4 pound of 10-10-10 in March and again in May. Mature peach trees (4 to 10 years of age) should receive 1 to 2 pounds of 10-10-10 fertilizer each in March and May. If the tree is vigorous and there are no fruit expected, only the March application is necessary. Broadcast the fertilizer around the outer edge of the tree keeping the trunk area free of fertilizer.

Insect and disease control VERY IMPORTANT – always read chemical labels and follow manufacturer's directions carefully to avoid injury to your tree, the environment or yourself. Peach trees are highly susceptible to disease and insect infestations, so spraying is extremely important. Many fruit trees die from pests that could have been controlled with proper spraying. To control Peach Leaf Curl, peach trees should be sprayed with **#1 Copper Fungicide** in the dormant season (early spring) before leaf buds open. Always follow manufacturer's directions. Peach Leaf Curl mainly affects young trees, as the tree matures, the disease disappears. A heavy infestation can kill a young tree. I

To control Brown Rot, spray with **#2 Daconil** or Fung-onil just before blooms open and when blooms are 90% open. These products are fungicides and will not harm pollinating bees.

To control fruit flies, mites, worms, scab and brown rot, spray with **#3 Orchard Spray**. 1. When petals have fallen. 2. 7 days later. 3. Every 10-14 days after that. Stop 1 week before harvest (early Aug.). Never spray pesticides when trees are in bloom as this will kill the pollinating honeybees.

Apply one last **#1 Dormant Oil** spray to the tree in late fall after most leaves have dropped.

Avoid spraying during freezing temps.

Good sanitation practices are necessary to control pest problems. Cut out all dead or diseased wood and disinfect pruning tools with a household disinfectant (Lysol or bleach). Pick up all fruit that has fallen to reduce insects.