



Caring For Peaches & Nectarines



Choosing a Site:

Peaches are one of the most difficult fruit trees to grow in the Willamette Valley. For this reason correct positioning and soil type are the keys to growing peaches successfully. Peaches bloom in early spring and flowers are easily damaged by frosts. A south facing site protected from the wind and frost is crucial. A fully-grown fan peach tree will have a spread to 16ft and a height of 8ft. The soil should be well-dug to a depth of 30" a couple of months before planting with plenty of compost being added. The neutral soil should be able to drain well, as well as hold some moisture.

Planting:

Plant bareroot trees as soon as possible in late winter/early spring. Potted trees can be planted any time soil can be worked. Soak the roots of your bareroot tree in Root Stimulator mixed with water while you prepare the hole. Dig the hole wide enough for the roots to spread outward and downward (about 1 ½' x 1 ½'). If the soil is heavy clay, mix compost with the soil (1/4 compost: 3/4 soil). Plant the tree so that the uppermost roots are just below the soil line and the graft union is above the soil line. If you wish to apply a slow release fertilizer, like Dr. Earth Fruit Tree fertilizer or Espoma Bio-Tone Starter Plus, you could do so now mixing fertilizer in with the soil, or you can apply fertilizer 4-6 weeks later around the drip line of the tree. Fill planting hole with soil mix, being sure there are no air gaps around roots. Put a stake about 4 inches from the trunk and attach tree trunk to stake with chain lock (never use wire or string). Prune out any crossing branches or overcrowded branches and prune broken branches back to a bud facing outward. Water your tree to get rid of any air pockets in soil and thoroughly moisten soil. Then pour the Root Stimulator mixed water that you soaked the roots in over the root area. To prevent sun scald, paint the trunk with a white latex paint slightly diluted with water from the soil line to the lowest branches.

Pruning:

Peaches should be pruned to a vase shape. Peaches can also be trained to a central leader, but have a tendency to overgrow in the tops. If you wish to have a central leader Peach tree, first all the lateral side branches need to be removed. Side branches need to continuously be removed for two years. Peaches need to be pruned more heavily than other trees. Last years shoots are this years fruiting branches. It is necessary to replace all fruiting wood each season. Un-pruned trees will produce a lot of very small fruits. Over time, the un-pruned trees will grow weak and stop fruit production. If this is the case, prune out all upper branches so the sun can reach the entire interior of the tree.

Harvesting:

Peaches should be picked when they are ripe, but also when they are still firm. Picking fruit when they are soft ripe will cause the fruit to become overripe. The fruit should easily come off the stem when picked. The fruit should be stored in the refrigerator or in another cool place.

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