

FRUIT FOR THE HOME AND GARDEN

sugar to every cup. Boil the skins just covered with water, with the lemon juice for about 20 minutes, or until the skins become puffy and the interior soft enough to be spooned out. Drain all in a colander and save the water which drains away. Mix the pulp and water and measure. Return to the saucepan and add the sugar. Bring to the boil and let it continue to boil briskly for about $\frac{1}{4}$ hour, by which time begin to test it. When the liquid jells, pour it into hot jars.

Passion fruit curd

6 passion fruit
4 tbsp butter
1 cup sugar
2 eggs

Place butter and sugar in a saucepan over slow heat and melt slowly. Beat eggs, then add the pulp of passion fruit and add to the butter and sugar. Simmer slowly until it reaches the consistency of honey. Pour into small jars.

FREEZING To freeze passion fruit, simply remove the soft centre and pulp and pack it, unsweetened, in a suitable container. This is best done in small convenient quantities of the size normally required.

DRINKS Many of the passion fruit drinks sold are made from synthetic flavourings and contain no actual passion fruit at all. A pleasant and non-alcoholic drink containing real passion fruit, which can be used as a kind of cordial or base for the addition of whisky, gin or vodka, is known as a Passion Fruit Painkiller.

Passion fruit painkiller

10 passion fruit, pulp only
2 cups water
1 cup sugar
2 tbsp citric acid

Make a syrup of the sugar and water and pour this over the passion fruit pulp. Add the citric acid, stir and leave overnight. Stir again and then strain. Chill. Serve with ice cubes alone or with spirits.

From Queensland in Australia comes a delicious drink called an Attorney; it is made from equal parts of passion fruit and pineapple, well chilled and heavily laced with rum.

PEACH

Prunus persica, syn. *Amygdalus persica*,
Persica vulgaris

Origin

The peach is a member of the rose family and closely related to the almond. As its specific name suggests, it was for a very long time considered to have originated in Persia, now Iran. However, it is now apparent that it came from China, where it has been cultivated for thousands of years, for there is mention of it in Chinese literature as far back as 551 BC. One fact that confirms this research is that the wild peach does not occur in Iran, but it has been found in many parts of China. There also are to be found all the main types in cultivation about the rest of the world: the round type to which most of our cultivars belong, the pointed type once popular but now little grown, and the flat peach which is grown there and in the warmer climates.

It is believed that the ancient Persians carried the peach into their country along the old silk routes. It seems to have been known in Europe before the first century BC. Alexander the Great may have brought it into the Graeco-Roman world. It is interesting that judging by the fruits pictured on ancient frescoes, the varieties of peach grown and enjoyed by the Romans were as large as they are today. Most ancient fruits are smaller than modern cultivars.

Peaches must have come early to Britain, since the Anglo-Saxons had a name for the fruit, *perseoc-treou*. By the time of Queen Elizabeth I, nectarines and peaches, mainly of French origin, were in cultivation. British gardeners began raising splendid peaches. An example is Pitmaston Orange, raised by Mr Edwards of Pitmaston in 1815, a variety which has not yet been surpassed in flavour. Another famous name is Thomas Rivers of Sawbridgeworth, and after him his son and grandson carried on his work with great success. Famous varieties raised by this firm are the early-maturing, white-fleshed, Duke of York; mid-season Peregrine with yellow flesh; and Pineapple, a late, white-fleshed variety.

The Spanish took the peach to Latin America during the sixteenth century. In the following century it was being grown in California. By the nineteenth century the fruit was being produced in Australia and a century later in South Africa.

Today, with the apple and the orange, the peach is probably the most widely cultivated fruit in the world.

As one would expect, since the plant has been in cultivation for such a long time, there are thousands of varieties or cultivars. Some have disappeared after a few years but others are constantly appearing. The important feature in some of the new peaches is their early ripening. This applies particularly to those varieties raised in America. The classification of the peach is based on the ripening of the fruit as well as upon certain characteristics of a plant such as the shape of the leaves, the colour, size and shape of the flowers, and the type of fruit - its colour, texture and whether or not the flesh clings to the stone.

Some peaches are grown entirely for the beauty of their early blossom. These do not produce fruits, or do not produce fruits of sufficient numbers or quality to be included here.

Peaches need mainly a warm climate to ripen properly and they are grown widely in temperate regions. On the other hand, low temperatures play an important role. Both peaches and the closely related nectarines need a certain amount of chilling during the trees' period of winter rest or dormancy in order for the normal development of buds to take place the following spring. The amount of chilling necessary varies. It is measured in the number of hours at or below 7°C (44°F). In some varieties the leaf buds need more chilling than the flower buds. Much research has been carried out on this factor and it is possible to select a variety, or several varieties, to suit a particular climate. However, there are several peach varieties developed locally to suit particular local needs that appear not to need chilling 'to break dormancy'. Leaf fall, followed by a short but not chilled rest, seems to suffice. It is well worth making enquiries before making a final selection for one's garden. Obviously, it is important when one lives in a warm climate to plant only those varieties that need a fairly low chilling period.

Italy and the United States produce the greatest amount of fruit; crops are also raised commercially in Canada, China, Japan, Australia, Israel and New Zealand, as well as smaller and more localised crops in Spain, France, Greece and Yugoslavia. Peaches will grow outdoors in cooler countries such as Britain, but not on a commercial scale, although in the past many were

greenhouse-grown. Gardens in many parts of the world contain a peach tree or two, since these can often be easily protected where this is necessary. The peach is a fine urban garden plant, although in built-up areas some gardeners need to beware of what has been called the 'finger-blight' applied by small boys!

The greatest disadvantage of the peach is that it blossoms early, but where means can be found to prevent the flowers from becoming frosted, the plants produce well. We have successfully grown peaches outdoors on the edge of the Cotswold escarpment in England, overlooking the river Severn, in a none too well sheltered garden. Yet, generally speaking, this is not a hot climate crop. Both the quality and size of many varieties of the fruit decreases as the tropics are approached, warns one authority on growing fruit in warm climates. All the same, it is possible to find certain kinds which will crop heavily. One of these is the China Flat peach, *P. p. compressa*, sometimes known as *P. p. var. patycarpa*, as well as varieties from the southern China race of peaches which have oval, pointed fruits with a deep groove situated at the base.

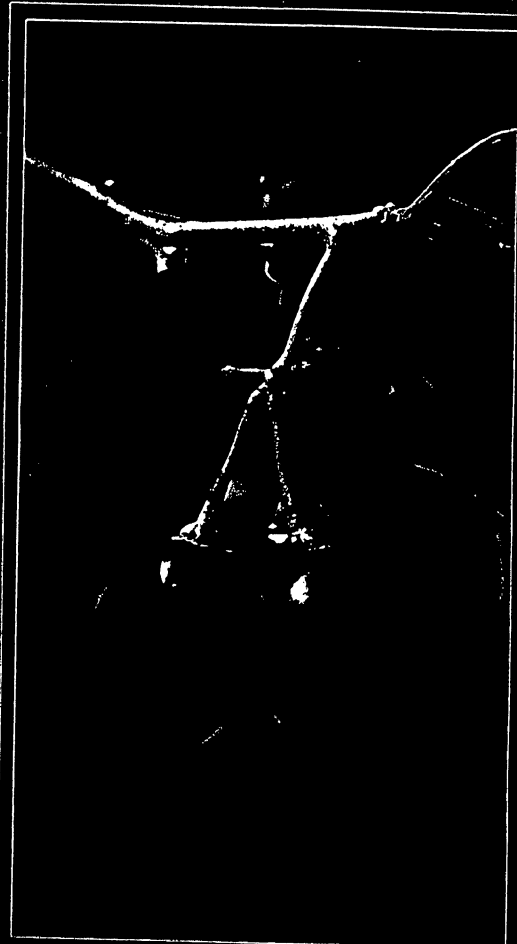
The fruit

Botanically, a drupe, usually of a spheroid shape, with a longitudinal groove, the pedicel being attached to the fruit at the bottom of a deep cavity. Depending upon the variety of the peach and also upon the soil, the fruit varies in colour. The velvety skin may be pale green, white or yellow. Usually one cheek, on the sunny side, is well coloured, but sometimes the flush covers the whole of the fruit. In some varieties this red colouring is deeper than in others. The colour of the flesh also varies. This also may be a very pale green, a white or a yellow. The white flesh is generally considered to be of the finest flavour. Plants bearing white-fleshed fruits are the hardiest for cold climates. Most yellow-fleshed varieties need warmer environments. Many of these varieties are American; an example is Hale's Early, which has an apricot-like skin, flushed and mottled with carmine red.

The stone of peaches is pitted and hard. In some the flesh clings to the stone, in others it parts freely. The varieties are classified into free-stones and clingstones.

FRUIT

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A comprehensive guide to cultivation and utilization

Leslie Johns & Violet Stevenson

ingredients and mix them until smooth. Add them to the peach juice, and stir continuously until the mixture thickens. Serve hot. This same sauce can be poured over peaches baked with the meat and handled separately.

The tips of young peach tree shoots flavour a milk pudding or ice-cream much as a vanilla pod would, but with its own characteristic almond scent. This is a use for any prunings.

PRESERVING Peach and Orange Jam can be made from:

Peach and orange jam

12 cups yellow peaches
3 oranges
9 cups sugar

Peel, stone and cut up peaches. Grate orange rind and squeeze juice. Cook for 30 minutes. Add sugar and cook quickly for $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ hour. Bottle and seal.

One of the most luxurious ways of preserving peaches is to bottle them in brandy. They are then ready to serve with cold meats on special occasions. Peaches can also be made into jams, the yellow-fleshed varieties being considered the best for this purpose. Use 6 cups fruit with $4\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar. In marmalades they can be used with lemon, oranges, limes or with melon. Conserves, preserves and butters can be made from them. Any of these can be incorporated into sweet sauces for pancakes and ice creams as well as for fillings for layer cakes.

FREEZING To freeze peaches, one method is to take fully ripe fruit, blanch them for $\frac{1}{2}$ –1 minute and remove the skin. The peaches can then be left whole or halved and stoned. They should then be packed in a heavy syrup with ascorbic acid.

One disadvantage of this method is that some fruits are liable to turn brown and to soften. To eliminate this possibility, peel the fruit under a little cold running water. Once they are peeled, brush them with lemon juice.

BOTTLING To bottle peaches prepare the fruits as for freezing. Process as for apricots.

And finally an unusual recipe for a sweetmeat, Peach and Apricot Leather.

Peach and apricot leather

2 cups dried apricots
1 cup dried peaches
caster sugar

Mince the fruit finely, two or three times, mixing them well in the process. Using a pastry board and rolling pin, roll out the mixture. This is best done a little at a time. Dust the board and the pin generously with the sugar and keep dusting the pin. When the leather is about 3 mm ($\frac{1}{8}$ in) thick, cut it into strips and slice these into pieces about 5 cm (2 in) by 2.5 cm (1 in). Roll the strips lengthwise into tight rolls.

DRYING Peaches can be dried like apricots (q.v.) and used in the same ways.

PEAR

Pyrus communis and other species

Origin

The plant is a member of the rose family, Rosaceae. The genus contains more than 30 species from widely differing climatic areas. Its name is derived from *pyrus*, the Latin for pear tree. The European pear, or wild pear, is a native of temperate Europe, including Britain and western Asia, reaching in fact to the Himalayas. It has been cultivated in Europe since ancient times. Obviously always highly esteemed, it has been uncovered in palaeolithic sites where it is believed to have been known some 40 centuries ago. We read of it from Pliny, who listed 39 varieties known to the Romans of his time. Authorities believe some of these to have been very similar to William's Bon Chretien, known as the Bartlett pear in America, after the man who took it there. This pear continued through the centuries to be grown in Italy. A list exists which shows that 232 varieties were known in the sixteenth century.

In Europe the most important pear growing areas appear always to have been in France, Belgium and west Germany, mainly because the climate is so suited to the cultivation of this fruit which needs warm summers and sufficient moisture at its roots; but another factor which contributed to this situation was that there were many

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and early summer by simply rubbing the young shoots off their stems. When the required growth is some 7–15 cm (3–6 in) long, it can be tied to the wires and kept within the fan pattern. Try to have the growth for the new fruit about 5–8 cm (2–3 in) apart all over the plant.

As frost is such a determining factor in the success of a peach crop, it is well worth protecting wall plants by covering them at night during periods when frost can be expected. The covering should be removed as soon as it is safe, so that early foraging insects can pollinate the blossoms. Yet even so some artificial aid is helpful. When the blossoms are open, pollinate them with a soft brush or the traditional rabbit's tail or paw, brushing one flower's stamens and passing on to the next and so on. Do this each day for ten days or so, or until all the blossom has opened, largely because some of the flowers are sure to be missed.

When the fruit is about the size of a hazel nut, thin out to 7–10 cm (3–4 in) apart, and repeat when the size of a walnut to about 20–25 cm (9 in). Some varieties thin themselves by dropping small fruits. On the other hand thinning frequently reduces this action, cutting the strain on a tree. So much of plant food goes into making the peach stone and kernel that by removing surplus fruits more food is available for those that remain. Work from the larger fruit, leaving these. Separate twins and remove all misshapen fruits.

When the tree is fruiting well, encourage it by feeding it a dose of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sulphate of ammonia per square m (square yd). In spring apply a good, deep mulch of well-rotted manure or garden compost right around the base of the tree.

Almost all peaches suffer at some time from peach leaf curl, and this can be prevented by spraying with Bordeaux mixture or a proprietary preparation as soon as the buds begin to swell in early spring. Evidence of the disease is the appearance of discoloured, distorted and swollen leaves.

Culinary uses

There are several recipes for peach drinks, mainly liqueurs though some wines. None of them give a product anything like as delicious, delicate or characteristic as the raw fruit itself, so without any equivocation, we say that if you would like

to drink a peach, eat one raw, in the peak of condition, and you cannot do better.

Immediately before they become ripe these fruits increase in size as well as improve in colour, so if you pick unripe fruit you are likely to be losing both quantity and quality. Even so, the fruit will continue to ripen and gain in flavour after it is picked, but it should be watched so that it does not become over-ripe.

The sugar content of a peach is about 9 per cent and the vitamins, especially of A and C, are greater than in most other fruits. Peaches contain a considerable amount of minerals and are lower in calories than either apples or pears. They are highly versatile fruits. When truly ripe they are among the most delicious in the world, as succulent and sweet eaten raw as cooked.

They are mainly eaten as desserts. They are excellent in compotes, mousses and ice-creams and in many types of pies, puddings and other sweets. They can be served in jellies, *bavarois*, stewed, baked, grilled or flambéed. They can be put, again fresh or cooked, into fritters, pancakes, dumplings and sweet batters of various types. Their juice is so good that it is often known as nectar. Any recipe given for nectarines or apricots can be used also for peaches.

Peaches have an affinity with almonds. One Italian sweet calls for halved peaches stuffed with a macaroon mixture, the biscuits being pounded with a little of the peach pulp, egg, butter and sugar. The peaches are then baked for 30 minutes.

The fruits can also be used in savoury dishes, baked with meats, spiced, or made into pickles. They can be served raw, bottled or canned, with cream cheese, nuts, lettuce or watercress and a vinaigrette sauce, as a side or a main salad. Try wrapping very thin slices of ham around peach halves filled with cream cheese and chives, or salami smeared with the merest hint of an aromatic mustard around a peach slice.

To make a Peach Sauce for ham, bacon and poultry, including a replacement for the ubiquitous orange sauce with duck, try the following.

Peach sauce

1 cup thick peach juice

3 teasp cornflour

3 teasp prepared English mustard

1½ tabsp white vinegar

Simmer the peach juice and combine the other

The plant

A neat small, deciduous tree, often short-lived (20–25 years), but highly productive and early maturing. Peaches from a budded tree should crop well in five years. Its flowers vary a little, some being small and a deep rose-pink, others being larger and pale, almost white, produced in pairs or solitary. The leaves are slender, lanceolate, 8–15 cm (3–6 in) long and finely toothed.

Cultivation

The selection of a suitable site for peaches and nectarines is most important. Spring frosts are likely to do most harm. In cold climates be sure that the site is frost free. Peaches should be grown where they can be protected without too much difficulty, and also in places where the early morning sun cannot play on the blossom after a frosty night. Low-lying land is particularly dangerous. Peaches should also be protected against cold winds.

In warm areas, the Chinese Flat peach, of which there are many varieties, is recommended because it flowers very early, before most other peaches, and by so doing often misses the frosts which are apt to occur at the more normal flowering times.

Many kinds of soil prove suitable. Peaches generally prefer light, warm, sandy or loamy soil which is well drained. They can be grown in heavier soils so long as these are well cultivated and well drained. A certain amount of lime in the soil is beneficial as with all stone fruit, but excessive lime content can be detrimental. Although soils should be fertile, they should not be too rich nor recently manured. Areas on high water tables are not suitable.

In an equable climate a peach tree can be grown in the open like any other tree, but in a cold climate it is usually grown in such a way that one's attention is inevitably focused more closely upon it, as it would be, for example, if it were growing trained against a warm wall. This is just as well, since a peach tree more than any other demands pruning and training throughout its life. Having said this, the mental picture of a peach tree in a Sydney garden, laden down with fruit, comes vividly to mind, since it was a tree which by most standards had been long and sadly neglected!

However, the first need is to decide in what way the plant should be grown, as a free-standing tree or bush, as a fan-trained specimen against the wall or an espalier growing on wires. The forms that can be produced by pruning are extremely varied. The greatest fruiting area on a tree is produced by a natural goblet, or the vase or inverted cone, such as one sees in commercial orchards in Australia, America and France. The French gardeners have even more elaborate goblets, *l'Y de la vallée de l'Eyrieux* and the *gobelet fleur de Liseron*, and for those gardeners who like the idea of an espalier to conserve space, they have the *U double*, the *palmette Verrier à quatre branches* and above all the *palmette à la diable*.

The greatest skill in the cultivation of the peach, however, lies in the way the plant is pruned so that it will continue to bear fruit. Pruning needs studying. The shoots produced by the peach are of four types and each of these needs a different treatment. There is the growth shoot, the flowering shoot bearing both growth and flower buds, spurs bearing a cluster of flower buds and usually a central growth bud and coarse growth shoots which spring from near the base of the tree. The main aim is to encourage the tree to continue to produce fruit and to promote and make space for new shoots, so that the old, non-fruiting shoots can be removed.

Bush trees are the easiest of all to grow in the open and this form can be used for peaches grown in containers. Once the plant is formed, little pruning is required and should consist mainly of the cutting away of infertile, badly placed or crossing branches.

Fruits of the peach and nectarine are naturally produced on long shoots made in the previous year, and also sometimes on short shoots or spurs. Of these two, the former is the more important. This fruiting wood does not fruit again. If left to grow naturally, the shoot will make new growth at its tips, which means that as it lengthens, the fruit is produced further and further away from the main stem. The object of pruning is to change the future zones of fruit production. Briefly, shoots which have borne fruit should be cut back each year to encourage new growth. Where a fan-trained plant is being grown, those shoots growing out to the front and back of the branches have to be removed to keep the tree on one plane. This is best done in spring

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