

### *Prunus persica*

The peach gets its botanical species name, *persica*, from the long-mistaken belief that it originated in Persia. In fact, trade along the old silk routes over two thousand years ago brought the fruit to Persia (modern day Iran) from China, where it had already been cultivated for two thousand years before that.

Today, peach trees are the second most commonly cultivated fruit trees in the world after apple trees.

Like the plum and the apricot, the peach is a member of the Rose family (*Rosaceae*) and distinguished by its velvety skin. It is classified as a drupe, a fruit with a hard stone.

Traditional peaches can require up to 1,000 chill hours (number of hours temperatures fall below 45°F) to produce high quality fruit. The fact that peaches and nectarines can be grown in central Florida is due to the continuing efforts of researchers at the University of Florida to develop trees that require less amounts of chill hours .

All peach trees sold at Rockledge Gardens have lower chilling requirements (300 hours or less) and are self fertile. \*\*Residents in the southern part of Brevard County should choose varieties that require 200 chilling hours or less.

### Description

Peaches and nectarines are deciduous trees that grow rapidly to 20 feet tall or more and about as wide, however, they can be maintained at 12 to 15 feet. Trees start bearing fruit at 3 to 4 years old, reaching a peak at about 12 years.

Depending on variety, fruit ripens somewhere between April and June.

Trees prefer full to partial sun (at least 6 hours a day), regular irrigation, and tolerate most soil types, as long as they are well-drained and slightly acidic. They have no salt tolerance.



### Planting Instructions

Prepare the soil by adding 1 part organic matter—such as our **Rockledge Gardens Planting Mix**—to 1 to 2 parts existing soil (use more Planting Mix in sandier soil). Use this mix to backfill the hole. Add a few cups of **Bio-Tone Starter Plus** when planting.

### Pruning

Although each tree will grow differently with few trees being perfectly symmetrical, the overall goal for peaches and nectarines is to develop an open center or vase-shaped tree to allow light penetration throughout the canopy to stimulate production of new fruiting wood, improve tree vigor and fruit quality and enable you to pick fruit without a ladder.

During the first spring and summer, trees should be managed to produce as much vegetative growth as possible, with major pruning left to the winter months when the trees are dormant. However, new plantings can be pruned lightly during the summer without reducing leaf surface area much. During the second and third years, young trees are trained to develop a branching system or tree canopy that will later support a well-distributed crop. Mature, producing trees from about three to ten years of age are usually pruned when dormant (December to February) and during the late spring and summer (May to August).

## **Peach Varieties**

**Flordabelle** (200 chilling hours): High-yielding tree, big semi-clingstone fruit, red-skinned with golden-yellow flesh. Fruit averages 2½ to 3 inches in diameter. Ripens early to mid-May.

**Flordaglo** (150 chilling hours): Large semi-clingstone fruit for its season; firm, red-skinned with non-browning white flesh. Ripens in late April to early May, about 78-80 days after blooming.

**Flordaprince** (150 chilling hours): Medium-size firm semi-clingstone fruit, yellow flesh with mostly red blush. Ripens in late April to early May, 78-83 days after full bloom. Most widely planted low-chill peach in the world.

**Flordawon** (200 chilling hours): Medium-size firm semi-clingstone fruit, white flesh with a red blush. Ripens late in the season in early June.

**Tropic Beauty** (150 chilling hours): Medium-size semi-freestone fruit, yellow melting flesh with a red blush. Ripens in mid-May, 85-94 days after full bloom.

**Tropic Snow** (200 chilling hours): Large, firm semi-freestone peach with sweet white flesh, excellent flavor and yellow to pink blush. Ripens in late May to early June, 110 days after full bloom.

**Tropic Sweet** (175 chilling hours): Large yellow-fleshed freestone with red-yellow blush. Ripens in May, 90-100 days after full bloom.

**UF Beauty** (150 chilling hours): Large yellow-fleshed freestone with red blush. Ripens in mid-May, 80 days after blooming.

**UF Gold** (200 chilling hours): High-yielding tree, big, firm semi-freestone with orange-yellow non-melting flesh and red blush. Firm texture gives this one a longer shelf life and delicious taste. Ripens in early May, 80 days after blooming.

**UF Sun** (150 chilling hours): Ultra-low chill, non-melting semi-clingstone peach. Sweet yellow flesh with red over bright yellow skin. Ripens in late April to early May, 80 days after blooming. Sweetens longer on the tree.

## **Nectarine Varieties**

**Sunhome** (250 chilling hours): A yellow flesh, semi-freestone nectarine with beautiful dark red foliage in the early spring and a beautiful ornamental pink bloom.

**Sunraycer** (250 chilling hours): Large semi-freestone with yellow flesh. Ripens in mid-May.

**UFQueen** (250 chilling hours): New and distinct variety with yellow, non-melting flesh with red skin.