

Peaches

China is the native home of peaches with a wide range of wild peach types in the countryside. The peach was brought to the Mediterranean area from Iran (formerly called Persia), the scientific name for the peach "Prunus persica". The peach was known in Greece by 300 BC and by the Romans shortly after 100 AD.

Early peaches were propagated by seed, the easiest way to transport the peach plant. Budded trees (so-called inoculated trees) became available in America around the time of the American Revolution. William Penn found peach trees in New England in 1682.

There are two major classes of peaches? They are the freestone and clingstone, describing the attachment of the flesh to the pit. The yellow, melting-flesh freestones are the most common type for the fresh market and home garden. The most popular of these are the 'Haven' series, including 'Redhaven.'

Peaches, nectarines, plums, apricots, and cherries all members of the Prunus genus, are closely related. They commonly are referred to as "stone fruits" because the seed is very large and hard. Although stone fruit crops can provide delicious fruit from June through September, most stone fruits are native to warmer climates of the world and therefore are very susceptible to injury from low winter temperatures. In addition, because they bloom early in the spring, the flowers frequently suffer damage from spring frosts.

Peaches and nectarines produce fruit on new wood, not on spurs, so a good harvest depends upon plenty of new growth. If trees are not pruned annually, the fruiting wood will grow further from the trunk and the ground every year, until the fruit is difficult to pick and the branches become so long that they can be broken easily by the wind or a heavy fruit load.

A peach is softer than apples, so it important to pick a peach using the sides of your fingers rather than the tips. If you use the tips of your finger to hold the peach, then you will put little dents in the peach. Using the sides of your fingers is a more gentle way to hold a peach and less likely to cause bruising. Grab the peach firmly and pull it straight off the branch.

West Virginia Peach Acreage and Production

West Virginia's tree fruit acreage has been declining, but peach production has averaged 6,000 tons, since 1994. West Virginia's peach production ranked 13th in the nation in 2007 with peach production located primarily in Berkeley, Hampshire, Jefferson and Morgan counties.

Loring is the most prevalent variety, followed by Redhaven and Cresthaven. The most prevalent other varieties were: Blake, Sunbrite, John Boy, Belair and Glohaven.

Peach Trivia

Basketball's Invention thanks to a peach basket. In December 1891, Canadian-born James Naismith, a physical education teacher at the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) training school in Springfield, Mass., took a soccer ball and a peach basket into the gym and invented basketball. In 1893, James Naismith replaced the peach basket with iron hoops and a hammock-style basket. Ten years later came the open-ended nets of today. Before that, you had to retrieve your ball from the basket every time you scored. The 10-foot height on the baskets came about because the first peach baskets were attached to the edge of an elevated running track that happened to be 10 feet off the floor.

Basketball, a game that started with a soccer ball, a peach basket and 18 men in a YMCA gymnasium in Springfield, Mass., has grown into a game that more than 300 million people play worldwide and many more people enjoy watching.

Speaking of peaches

Buy fresh peaches from our local producers and farm markets. Locally grown tree ripened peaches taste really good and are good for you. Support our local farmers by buying their produce.

In celebration of National Farmers' Market Week, August 2-8, Agriculture Commissioner Gus R. Douglass and the WVDA are challenging West Virginians to EAT LOCAL on Wednesday, August 5. "Eating Local" means only eating food that is produced within a 100-mile radius of your home. Join us in supporting West Virginia farmers and the local economy on August 5 by eating local.

National Farmers' Market Week-August 2-8, 2009

For a list of farmers' markets and West Virginia-grown items, visit http://www.wvagriculture.org/Division_Webpages/marketing.html.

WVU Organic Research Farm Field Day

Organic Research Farm hosts field day, offers free workshops WVU's Organic Research Farm will host its annual field day from 1:30-7 p.m. on Wednesday, August 5. The farm is situated on 71 acres of land off of Route 705 and Stewartstown Road in Morgantown and houses studies on field crops, livestock, organic pasture management, vegetable production, soil quality and weed, insect and disease management. As part of the farm's mission to provide best-practice recommendations for organic farmers and home gardeners, the field day events will include in-depth workshops, wagon tours of research plots and demonstrations of organic practices. Some new activities this year are demonstrations of organic production methods for bio-fuel crops such as canola, sunflower, switchgrass and soybean. The field day is free and open to everyone including organic growers, students, who want to learn about alternative food production practices, home gardeners, who want to avoid pesticides, conventional growers, who are considering transitioning to organic, and extension agents or pest-management advisers. The gates will open at 1 p.m. with workshops beginning at 1:30 p.m. Wagon tours begin at 4 p.m., and a dinner sponsored by the WVU Plant and Soil Sciences Club will be served at 6 p.m. Participation in the event is free, but pre-registration is appreciated. For more information or to register, contact Kotcon at 304-293-8822 or jkotcon@wvu.edu. For a schedule of field day events, go to <http://davis.blogs.wvu.edu/blog/2009/7/15/fdsched09>

West Virginia Gypsy Moth Suppression Program

The Gypsy Moth Suppression Program is a cooperative regional suppression program between landowners, the County Commissions in the generally infested counties, The West Virginia (WVU) Cooperative Extension Service, WVDA, and the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USDA-FS). Aerial treatments will be done in the generally infested area on a demand basis only to minimize the damage to forests and reduce the impact of the gypsy moth in future years. Treatments will not be done with the intent of eradicating the pest.

Landowners in the 34 participating counties of West Virginia that have had problems with the gypsy moth may sign up for the program any time between now and the end of August at the West Virginia University (WVU) Extension Service county office, or through the WVDA offices at: Charleston (304) 558-2212, Elkins (304/637-0290), New Creek (304)788-1066, or Morgantown (304) 285-3133.

The completed applications must be submitted by August 31, 2009. Brochures about the gypsy moth and the 2010 CSCL Program are also available from Extension agents or they can be downloaded from the WVDA website at www.wvagriculture.org.

For more information, contact Gary Gibson, Director or S. Clark Haynes, WVDA, Assistant Division Director of the Plant Industries Division in Charleston, at 304-558-2212 or Quentin "Butch" Sayers, WVDA, Gypsy Moth Program Manager, at 304-788-1066.

Additional information and assistance may also be obtained through you local WVDA offices located at: Charleston (304) 558-2212, Elkins (304) 637-0290, Morgantown (304) 285-3133, and New Creek (304)788-1066. Or on the WVDA New Creek Web site at <http://wvdanewcreek.home.comcast.net>

National Farmers' Market Week August 2-8, 2009

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Berkeley County Youth Fair Dates and Dates to remember

62nd Annual Berkeley County Youth Fair dates are August 2 - 8, 2009

West Virginia State Fair dates 14-22, 2009. For more information on the WV State Fair go to <http://www.statefairfowv.com/>

Penn State Agricultural Progress Days August 18 - 20, 2009 for more information go to <http://apd.psu.edu/>

Garden Tips

Seed summer squash for fall crop

Seed spinach

Plant Swiss chard

Plant cabbage for fall crop

Seed lettuce for fall crop

Until next time... Happy Gardening and Farming! See you at the Berkeley County Youth Fair Next Week! Help celebrate National Farmers' Market Week by visiting a local Farmers' Market.

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