



Prunus persica Peach¹

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INTRODUCTION

Widely popular for their sweet, juicy fruits and beautiful blossoms, Peach trees are actually plagued by so many different pests and diseases that they should probably only be planted by the horticulturally dedicated homeowner (Fig. 1). A low, broad tree, 15 to 25 feet tall with an equal or greater spread, Peach trees form a rounded crown with upwardly-reaching branches clothed in three to six-inch-long, dark green, deciduous leaves. The lovely flowers which appear in April before the new leaves unfold are available in single, semi-double, and double forms in colors ranging from pure white to deep red and bicolors. The flowers are susceptible to damage by late spring frosts or especially cold winters. The luscious three-inch-diameter fruits mature in July to August. Bright yellow fall color really stands out in many years.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Prunus persica*

Pronunciation: PROO-nus PER-sick-uh

Common name(s): Peach

Family: *Rosaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 8 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: Bonsai; espalier; fruit tree; hedge; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 1. Young Peach.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 25 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: round

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: fast

Texture: coarse

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** serrate; serrulate
- Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); lanceolate
- Leaf venation:** banchidodrome; pinnate
- Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous
- Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** yellow
- Fall characteristic:** showy

Flower

- Flower color:** pink; red; white
- Flower characteristics:** showy; spring flowering

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** round
- Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches
- Fruit covering:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** red; yellow
- Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; suited for human consumption; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant

litter; showy

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns
- Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure
- Breakage:** resistant
- Current year twig color:** green; reddish
- Current year twig thickness:** medium; thin

Culture

- Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
- Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; well-drained
- Drought tolerance:** moderate

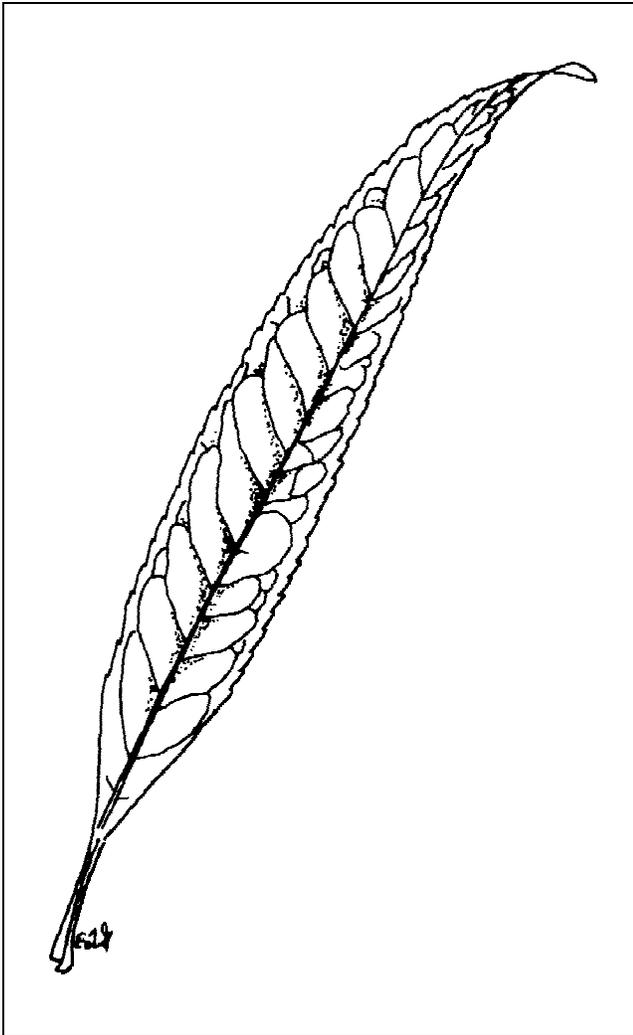


Figure 3. Foliage of Peach.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Ozone sensitivity: tolerant

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

USE AND MANAGEMENT

They have been successfully used in medians of boulevards and around parking lots in a number of Texas communities. They make effective screens for six to seven-months due to their dense, low-branching habit, but are not particularly attractive in winter. Avoid excessive pruning as this stimulates internal sprouting. Many trees live only 8 to 15-years.

Peach trees should be located in full sun or partial shade on very well-drained, moist, acid soils. The trees should be kept on a regular spray and fertilization schedule to insure best fruit production but this is not needed if fruit is not important. Do not allow water to stand around the roots.

Propagation is by cuttings or grafting.

Pests

Aphids cause distortion of new growth, deposits of honeydew, and sooty mold.

Borers attack flowering Peach. Keep trees healthy with regular fertilizer applications.

Scales of several types infest *Prunus* spp. Horticultural oil is used for some control of scales.

Spider mites cause yellowing or stippling but they are very difficult to see.

Tent caterpillars make large webbed nests in trees then eat the foliage. One defoliation may not be serious and small nests can be pruned out and destroyed. Use *Bacillus thuringiensis* when the insects are first seen and are still small.

Diseases

Peach leaf curl can attack flowering Peach. The leaves have red, curled, and distorted areas.

A bacterium causes leaf spot and twig cankers on Peach. Small, reddish spots dry, and drop out, giving a shot holed appearance. Defoliation can be severe when conditions favor disease development. Fertilize infected trees and prune out infected branches.

A fungus causes reddish spots which drop out leaving shot holes. Once the holes appear the leaves may drop. The disease is worse in wet weather, but usually does not require control measures.

Black knot causes black swellings or galls on the branches. Branches with galls are pruned out.

Powdery mildew causes a white coating on the leaves.

Peach trees may be subject to witches broom. Branches are deformed and clusters of small branches

form. Infected branches bloom and leaf out earlier.
Brooms are pruned out.