

How To Grow *Organic Peaches* in the Southeastern United States

Step 1: Cultivar Selection

- 'Redhaven' (resistant to bacterial spot) and 'Contender' (some resistance to brown rot).
- If possible, grow on peach-plum hybrid rootstock, such as MP-29 to prevent Armillaria root rot (ARR).
- Make sure to select trees bred for your climate zone and chill hours.

Step 2: Site Selection & Planting

- Avoid planting into spots with old tree roots, especially if removed trees were diseased.
- Plant tree so that soil line in pot is same as soil line in garden. Do NOT bury tree trunk.
- Consider root-collar excavation (RCE) method: mound soil and shallow-plant trees, then expose primary roots after year 2.
- Drip irrigation may be essential during first year to make sure tree gets established.
- Consider using root inoculant for healthier trees with beneficial fungi partners. (*our recommendation, not Clemson's)

Step 3: Tree Maintenance

- Perform annual pruning with clean, sharpened tools.
- Prune trees as late as flower bloom and only on dry days.
- Spring application of predatory nematodes around tree trunk to prevent peach tree borers.
- Spring - summer: apply double sided tape to trunk and several branches to monitor for peach scales.
- Use Surround/kaolin clay weekly throughout growing season to reduce tree stress, pest insects, and disease pressure.
- Use drip irrigation (not overhead) to reduce diseases; on wet years, no irrigation necessary for established trees.
- Mulch under tree to improve soil health and reduce weed pressure, but do not cover trunk or main roots coming out of trunk base.
- Utilize plant biodiversity to reduce disease pressure and attract predatory insects.

Step 4a: Flower Maintenance

- If high disease pressure or wet years, apply organic fungicide during bloom (example: sulfur).
- Leave no more than 300 fruit per mature tree after fruit set.

Step 4b: Fruit Maintenance

Option 1: Fruit "bagging"

- Apply organic pesticide (such as neem oil) to peaches when fruit is about the size of a thumb.
- When fruit and foliage is bone dry, put fruit bag over each fruit.

Option 2: Weekly Organic/OMRI Sprays

After fruit set, apply combinations of Surround/kaolin clay weekly + neem oil every 10-14 days + Bt every 10-14 days. (If regular heavy rains, apply more frequently.)

Step 5: Cross Fingers & Toes

- Hope for dry weather during bloom.
- Hope for dry weather during fruit ripening.