



Peach Cultivation

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INTRODUCTION

Peach, which was traditionally cultivated in temperate regions, but due to availability of some varieties are extremely popular and profitable in the semi-arid areas, now it can be cultivated in sub-tropical areas. In India, peach cultivation is confined to mid hill zone of Himalayas extending from J&K U.T. to Khasi Hill at an altitude of 1500 to 2000 metres above msl. Low chilling cultivars are also grown in sub mountainous zones of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and U.P. and gaining popularity in sub-tropical areas of Jammu. It is a nutritious fruit tree. In addition to being tasty, peach is a rich source of vitamins and minerals. The main points for peach cultivation are as follows:

Climate and Soil: Peach does well in wet and cool climate with cold winter and dry summer. It likes mild climate. The limiting factors in peach cultivation are the minimum winter temperature, chilling hours, spring frost, hailstorms, high humidity and desiccating winds during summer. In sub-tropical areas of North, the low chilling cultivars require 50-300 hours of chilling during the winter for proper flowering and fruiting. Peach thrives in sandy loam soil with good drainage, where the groundwater level is below 2 meters and the hardpan layer within 2 meters is absent; such soil is ideal. Poorly drained soil should be rejected for peach cultivation.

Popular Varieties:

Sharbati: This is a very fine variety, with fruits ready by June. The skin is soft and the fruit is juicy.

Shan-e-Punjab: This variety ripens in May. The fruit size is good, and the total soluble solids (sweetness) are 12-13 percent.

Florida Sun: This is the earliest ripening variety, ready in April. It is light in weight (40 grams) and has total soluble solids of 9-10 percent.

Prabhat: This variety is ready by the end of April. The average fruit weight is 45 grams, and total soluble solids are 13 percent.

Sun Red: This is a fibreless variety. The fruit weighs 30 grams and sweetness is 12 percent.

Other cultivar: Florida Prince, Partap, Early Grand, Saharanpuri, July Elberta, Quetta.

Rootstock: Rootstocks used for peach are wild peach, apricot, plum and peach. Rootstock in sub-tropical areas are generally grown from the seeds of desi peach tree or some commercial cultivars like Sharbati and Khurmani. Seed should be extracted from ripe fruit only. Pre-soaking of peach seed in GA3 at 100 ppm for 24 hours before placing them under stratification (1-5°C for 60-70 days) improves germination and reduces time for germination.

Plant propagation method: All peach plants are prepared by grafting. Take one-year-old branches

and place a piece of wood under them. Soak the grafts in a 1000 PPM IBA solution and place them on raised beds.

Time for planting the orchard: Planting should be done 6 metres apart in pits of 1m x 1m x 1m dug few months in advance of plantation. Planting is done in Nov-Dec month.

Pruning and trimming: Pruning should be done in December after leaf fall. The open-center method is best for peaches; four branches are kept in all directions, and the central head is cut. Each year, at the time of pruning, one-third of all branches are cut. Wounds larger than 5 cm should be treated with Bordeaux paste.

Fertilizers and nutrients: The peaches have high requirement for nitrogen and potassium as compared to phosphorous.

Age of tree (Year)	FYM (kg/tree)	Urea (g/tree)	DAP (g/tree)	MOP (g/tree)
1	10	55	20	65
2	15	115	40	130
3	20	170	65	200
4	25	225	85	265
5	25	280	110	330
6	25	395	150	585
7	25	510	195	750
8	25	62	240	915
9	25	735	280	1080

Apply FYM, DAP & MOP in December or January. Urea should be given in two split doses, one 2-3 weeks before normal bloom, while rest half of urea be applied 3 weeks after fruit set

Irrigation: Water at a gap of one week during summers and at intervals of 10-15 days in winters. Stop irrigation at the end of October and start again after harvest in December.

Weeding and hoeing: Weeding and hoeing at intervals of 15-20 days in young plants improves air circulation in the roots, which helps plants grow faster. It also frees the soil from weeds that cause loss of moisture and nutrients.

Fruit harvesting: Fruits should be harvested only when they have fully grown. In the case of Floridasan, all fruits should be harvested when 50% of the fruit has colored. Fruits should be cut with scissors, keeping a small stem attached. The yield may vary from 50 to 125 kg per tree depending upon the cultivars and orchard management practices. The peak harvesting period of peach in sub-tropical plains is from last week of April to mid of June.

Pest control:

1. **Peach Leaf Curl Aphid:** Nymphs and adults suck the sap from the leaves, petiole, blossom

and fruits causing leaf curl and distortion. Blossoms wither and fruit do not develop and drop if formed. Spray chlorpyrifos 20 EC @ 2ml/litre of water or dimethoate 30EC @ 2ml/litre of water to control.

2. **Peach fruit fly:** These lay eggs inside the pulp of ripening fruits. It causes the fruits to ripen and rot while still small. To prevent this, plant early ripening varieties, do not let the fruits over-ripen, and thoroughly turn the soil around the trees in May-June and again in December-January. Fruit fly can be controlled by spraying the tree with dimethoate 30 EC @ 2ml/ litre of water.

3. **Chaffer beetles:** Adult beetle feeds on leaves, buds, blossom and fruitlets. Eaten away leaves are perforated. The grubs feed on roots and may cause wilting of the plant. Apply Chlorpyrifos 1.5% D @ 8 10 Kg/ acre in the soil against the grubs of chaffer beetles.

4. **Termites:** To protect against termites, before planting the seedlings, mix 50 ml Chlorpyrifos 20 EC in 5 liter of water and pour it into the pit. Before applying the pesticide solution, pour 2-3 buckets of water into the pit. Plow the soil deeply around the trees and maintain cleanliness.