How to Grow Peaches

By Marty Wingate
Better Homes and Gardens

Peaches fresh from the garden: It's the perfect picture of summer. Can't you just feel the juice running down your chin? It's perfectly reasonable to think you can learn how to grow peaches in USDA Zones 5-9. Pick the right peach and the right place, and give the tree the right care, and you'll be picking ripe fruit in just a year or two.

Grow Peaches in the Right Spot
The trees do best in a spot with full sun -- at least 6 hours per day, and good air flow.

Because grass is greedy, it will suck up moisture and nutrients from the soil around the tree. Keep the ground around the trunk free of grass for at least the first few years. Putting a 2-inch-deep ring of mulch around your tree will help the soil stay moist during periods of drought and keep your peach tree's trunk safe from lawn mower or string trimmer damage. Yearly applications of a dry organic fertilizer for fruit trees will help keep your peach tree healthy; follow directions on the package.

Peaches like it hot, so if you live in a cool-summer region, choose the warmest place in your garden. That's most likely up against a south-facing wall, where the tree will receive radiated heat and reflected light. Often these spots are in narrow planting beds -- between a walk and the garage wall, for example -- so you may want to grow peaches in an espaliered style, where the branches are trained in a two-dimensional fashion. Get creative and train the tree in a fan or candelabra form.

Most peach varieties are grown on another kind of peach's roots. This gives them extra hardiness and disease resistance, or makes them a smaller, more compact plant. The graft, where the two different plants meet, looks like an old scar. Be sure to plant your peach tree so the bud union -- the place where the trunk was grafted onto rootstock -- is about an inch above the soil line. Covering that graft can cause problems, so be sure the tree trunk doesn't sink over time. One way to prevent this is to plant the tree 2 to 3 inches higher than soil level.

Peach Varieties
The best peaches for cool-weather regions include 'Frost' and 'Avalon Pride'. Wondering how to grow peaches on your deck or patio? Take a look at dwarf selections including 'Pix-Zee' and 'Honey Babe'; those trees reach only about 6 feet tall and will grow in large pots. More peach varieties include:

'Canadian Harmony' peach Prunus persica - 'Canadian Harmony' forms brilliant, bright red fruits with splashes of yellow. The large freestone peaches have a sweet flavor and good texture. Zones 5-8

'Cresthaven' peach Prunus persica - 'Cresthaven' is a medium to large freestone peach that is almost fuzzless. Its bright red skin touched with gold is striking. A nonbrowning, late-season variety, it is favored for canning and freezing. Zones 5-9

'Donut' peach Prunus persica - 'Donut' is grown for its dependable, large yields of fruits that resemble doughnuts. 'Donut' peach produces a flat fruit with a sunken center and a plump outer edge. The clingstone fruit is sweet and juicy. Zones 5-8

'Elberta' peach Prunus persica - 'Elberta' is a large freestone peach that produces a mid- to late-season crop. This old favorite has golden skin with a red blush. Tree is resistant to brown rot. Zones 5-9
‘Reliance’ peach *Prunus perscia* - ‘Reliance’ is a very hardy peach that is good for cold regions. This large freestone fruit has dark red skin blushed with yellow and bright yellow flesh. A vigorous producer, it requires thinning. Zones 4-8

**How to Prune Peaches**

Proper pruning is an important part of how to grow peaches -- and that includes timing as well as technique. Prune peaches in late winter but before spring bloom. Aim to establish an open canopy so sunlight can reach all of the fruit; too much shade can reduce the number of flowers produced, and that means fewer fruits -- which leads to fewer servings of peach cobbler. All pruning starts by taking out dead, broken, or dying branches first, and then removing branches that cross, and finally removing branches that are thinning. Just doing that will reduce congestion and open up the tree.

Peaches produce flowers and fruit on wood that grew last year. The best branches to keep will be about as thick as a pencil and no more than 18 inches long -- longer stems can be cut back to an upward-facing bud. Yearly pruning helps your tree, so don’t be afraid to get in there with a sharp bypass pruner.

**Preventing Disease**

Peaches are not without their problems, but when you dream of sinking your teeth into a fresh peach or enjoying peach jam through the winter, you won’t mind dealing with potential pests and diseases.

Peach leaf curl is the nemesis of many a home gardener, although other fungal problems may exist, such as brown rot. Although many cultivars are resistant to peach leaf curl, your tree may still get this foliar disease, especially when it’s young. Often, as trees mature, they grow out of the disease. But the best offense is a good defense, so take steps now to minimize the problem.

Here’s how to grow peaches that are disease-free: use a lime-sulfur spray, which is approved for organic growers. The timing of the spray is important -- it needs to be applied at specific intervals in the tree’s budding out, so read the label on the product carefully.

**RAGBRAI Riders Plant Milkweed Across Iowa**

By Kelly Guilbeau and Elizabeth Hill

Milkweed Matters

Last month, as riders in the Register’s Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa (RAGBRAI) followed the route from “river to river” across Iowa, many tossed small objects into the roadside ditches. They weren’t littering; instead, they were helping to plant common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) seedballs to create breeding and feeding habitat for Monarch butterflies.

The effort was spearheaded by Milkweed Matters and Monarchs in Eastern Iowa, two groups that organize educational programs and advocate for Monarch butterflies and their habitat. Milkweed Matters was established in 2014 by two Grinnell area activists, Kelly Guilbeau and Carolynn McCormick, and this year, expanded its work into a RAGBRAI riding team, educational seedball making workshops, and eight informational booths along the route.

During RAGBRAI, the two organizations led efforts to distribute 46,000 seedballs to RAGBRAI participants. Assisting in the distribution effort were volunteers from Iowa State University Extension staff, Master Gardener groups, Grinnell College student interns, and local conservationists from across Iowa. 2016 marked the third year of efforts to spread milkweed seed along the RAGBRAI route: In 2014 with loose seed in packets, and in 2015 with the first use of seedballs during the Monarchs in Eastern Iowa RAGBRAI Seedball Project, which distributed these to riders passing through Mount Vernon.

During the spring of 2016, 36 events brought together more than 2,000 Iowans to learn about the importance of the Monarch’s habitat and prepare 50,816 milkweed seedballs. Composed of 50 percent soil and 50 percent clay, each seedball contained 2 to 6 common milkweed seeds collected from Iowa roadsides. The volunteers who rolled the seedballs represented a variety of audiences and age groups from elementary school students, scout troops, 4H clubs, Masters Gardeners, and nursing home residents, to area Grange members, Anamosa State Penitentiary inmates, and members of corporate teams.

Volunteers staffed a booth along the route each day of RAGBRAI, educating riders, team support staff, and locals about the population decline of Monarch butterflies and other pollinators, and giving them the opportunity to help by tossing milkweed seedballs into the public roadside ditches along the biking and support vehicle routes and along portions of the Wabash Trace Nature Trail and Kewash Nature Trail.

“*My voice is much more sore than my thighs*” said Elizabeth Hill, after riding and speaking with hundreds of riders over the week.
Volunteer Courtney Turnis of Coon Rapids, Iowa, hosted the Milkweed Matters biking team at her family home in Corning and was in charge of the volunteer booth in Mt. Ayr. “A little boy came to pick up some seedballs and he had the tiniest hands,” Turnis said. “But after I gave him a handful, he told me, ‘I can carry a lot more than that.’ ”

Seedballs are often used to plant wildflowers because the clay medium protects seeds from being eaten by small mammals and supports the cold moist stratification, or “overwintering” process that seeds must go through to germinate. “While some milkweed seeds planted along the RAGBRAI route may germinate this fall, the majority of them will germinate in the spring, and grow into plants that Monarchs will lay their eggs on next summer,” said Guilbeau.

Milkweed Matters hopes to continue the momentum of the planting project, and will continue to encourage Iowans to learn about the need for pollinators and their habitat. “We were absolutely thrilled with the response we received during the week,” said Kelly Guilbeau, “There were bikers, longboarders, support vehicle drivers, and town volunteers, who stopped each day to pick up more seedballs. It was a powerful display of grassroots crowd planting.”

Property owners and public land managers can assist with the cause by learning about roadside management practices and pollinator habitat needs. Connect with the cause by visiting www.milkweedmatters.org.

**Upcoming Horticulture Events of Interest:**

**Glenwood Lake Park Farmers Market**

Wednesdays, June 4 - Sept. 7, 4:00 – 7:00 PM
Located at Glenwood Lake Park

**Highway 34 Farmers Market**

Tuesdays, starting June 2 – Sept 6, 4:00 – 7:00 PM
Located at the intersection of Highway 34 and

**Silver City Farmers Market**

Saturdays starting June 7 – Labor Day, 8:00 – 11:00 AM
Located in the Silver City Park

**Malvern Farmers Market**

Fridays starting June 6 – Labor Day, 6:00 – 8:00 PM
Located on Main Street in Heritage Park

**New location and live entertainment every week. Check out the Facebook page:**
https://www.facebook.com/#!/MalvernMarket

**Omaha Fall Plant Sale – NE Statewide Arboretum**

**Date:** Saturday, September 12, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
**Location:** Douglas/Sarpy County Extension, 8015 W. Center Road, Omaha, NE 68124

For more information about NE Statewide Arboretum plant sales, visit: [http://arboretum.unl.edu/plant-sales](http://arboretum.unl.edu/plant-sales)

**Heartland Native Plant Summit – Cultivating Resilient Landscapes**

**Date:** Wednesday, October 5 – Thursday, October 6
**Location:** Lauritzen Gardens,
**Cost:** The registration fee for the two-day conference is $150/person (student rate $75/person). Registration fee covers the entire program plus the cost of lunch, networking reception, and dinner on October 5, box lunch on October 6, and refreshments at breaks. Registration deadline is September 23, 2016.

The Heartland Native Plant Summit will explore innovative ways native plants can be used to craft landscapes that are beautiful, sustainable, and naturally resilient to drought.

To register: [https://www.lauritzengardens.org/Visit/Events_and_Events/Heartland_Native_Plant_Summit/index.asp](https://www.lauritzengardens.org/Visit/Events_and_Events/Heartland_Native_Plant_Summit/index.asp)

**4 Alternatives to Drying Herbs**

By Jean Nick
Rodale’s Organic Life

Farmers’ markets and gardens are bursting with tasty fresh herbs this time of the year, so it is a perfect time not only to enjoy them fresh but also to try preserving them for use later—especially the frost-tender ones, such as basil and pineapple sage, which will be gone with the first nip of frost. Preserving fresh organic herbs is a great way to add flavor to your food, plus by not purchasing pesticide-grown plants you support a healthy environment at the same time! And you’ll save money by not having to buy tiny bottles of the dried stuff that loses its flavor before you have time to use it up.

Drying herbs couldn’t be simpler and is a great way to preserve parsley, rosemary, mint, thyme, and many others. But some herbs will be mere shadows of their former selves when dried, hardly worth the time and
effort it takes to do it. Luckily, there are lots of simple alternatives, such as freezing and making herbal butters and vinegars, and pretty much all herbs are suited to these methods.

**Freezing Herbs**

Freezing herbs is easy, even if you have a small freezer. The simplest way to freeze herbs is to spread dry, clean whole or chopped leaves onto a baking sheet, freeze overnight, and put the frozen herbs into sealed containers in the freezer for later use. Frozen herbs prepared this way last for months before they start to get tired-looking. I like to freeze chives for sprinkling on baked potatoes in the dead of winter, when my herb patch is locked under snow.

For longer storage, freeze herbs by snipping leaves into small bits, packing the bits into an empty ice-cube tray, filling about ¾ full with water, and freezing; one measured tablespoon of herbs per cube is a good amount. The next day, top off with water and freeze again (this covers the floating bits with ice to prevent freezer burn). Pop the finished cubes into a sealed container in the freezer. Drop frozen cubes into soups, stews, and such, for fresh-cut flavor.

Pesto also freezes well—freeze it in an ice-cube tray and store the cubes in airtight containers in the freezer. First, discover the secret of making gorgeous, emerald-green pesto.

**Herbal Butters**

Another great method for preserving herbs is to make them into flavored butter and freeze that. Mince 1 part herbs (one type, or a blend) and mash into 2 parts softened organic butter, shape into a log, and freeze. Cut off slices of herb-flavored butter as needed to melt over vegetables, meat, or fish, or to sauté in recipes for the taste of summer all winter long. My favorite flavored butter is made with minced garlic and parsley, which makes awesome garlic bread!

**Herb-Flavored Vinegar**

Herb-flavored vinegar is a delicious, pretty way to savor herbs long after the growing season is past. You don’t need any special equipment to make them; just reuse attractive glass bottles, so your tasty gifts will also be tasteful.

To make flavored vinegar, you will need bottles and cork stoppers to fit them (vinegar eats metal lids, even coated ones), enough good commercial vinegar to fill them, and fresh or dried herbs and spices. I like to use white-wine vinegar for delicate flavors like lemon balm, and organic apple-cider vinegar for more robust flavors like rosemary.

Wash and pat dry any fresh herbs—tarragon is a classic vinegar flavoring—and slide the whole leaves into the bottles, using a chopstick or wooden skewer as needed. Peeled garlic cloves and any kind of small peppers (slit down the side) are also nice choices for making flavored vinegar. Use about ½ cup of herbs per 2 cups of vinegar, or more if you want a very concentrated flavor. Fill the bottles with room-temperature vinegar and cork. Store in a cool, dark place. The flavor will continue to strengthen for 4 to 6 weeks. Use herb-flavored vinegars in salad dressings and marinades, splashed over veggies, or anywhere a recipe calls for vinegar or lemon juice.

To store vinegar longer, melt some beeswax (in a small steel can set in a pan of simmering water), and dip the corked end of the bottle into the wax to coat the top ¼ inch of the glass and the exposed cork. Let the wax harden, and repeat several times to build up a good coating. For extra-special gifting, drape a short length of ¼"- to ½"-wide ribbon over the top of the just-dipped bottle after the first dip. Hold the loose ends against the bottle neck and dip the top again, ribbon and all. The ribbon looks really classy, and makes it easy to remove the wax seal later.

**Herb-Flavored Oils**

You can also use your glass jars and corks for flavored oils. But placing herbs, garlic, peppers, fruit, and such, that contain even a trace of moisture into any oil is asking for trouble: The oil seals out the air and makes the perfect environment for botulism bacteria to thrive in the plant material. To be safe, you must store herb-flavored oils in the refrigerator and use them within a few weeks.

As an alternative, you can dry the herbs and other flavorings in a food dehydrator, or in the sun, until they are completely dry before adding them to a light-flavored organic olive oil or other cold-pressed oil. Add about 2 tablespoons of crushed dried herbs to 2 cups of oil.

**Beneficial Insect Released in Allamakee County to Help Manage Emerald Borer**

By Dustin Vande Hoef, Kevin Baskins, Laura Stemweis
Iowa State University

DES MOINES, Iowa – Beneficial insects have been released at Mount Hosmer City Park in Lansing for the biocontrol of emerald ash borer (EAB). Lansing is second location in Iowa to receive natural enemies. These very small stingless wasps target and kill EAB, a devastating...
exotic pest of ash trees. This control approach known as biological control reunites natural enemies with an invasive pest, in this case to help suppress EAB populations. Lansing is in Allamakee County.

Following rigorous testing and research one or more parasitic wasp species, native to Asia, have been released in 24 of the 27 states where EAB has been detected. Nearly two months ago this biocontrol effort began in Fairfield in Jefferson County. Additional sites will be utilized pending resources and approval.

Like the county park outside Fairfield, two species of Asian parasitic wasps will be used to seek and destroy EAB at Mount Hosmer City Park in Lansing. Release locations are designed for site-approved public lands and parks and must meet specific guidelines.

The parasitoids are produced and supplied from the United States Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine EAB Parasitoid Rearing Facility in Brighton, Mich. For parasitoid information please call 866-322-4512.

“Being able to utilize natural enemies is an approach we can use to our advantage to help reduce the spread of emerald ash borer,” said Mike Kintner, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship EAB coordinator. “The predatory wasps will never offer complete control, but once established in an area they will spread naturally alongside with EAB, lessening the impact to ash trees across the landscape.”

The two species of parasitic wasps available from USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service target the larval and egg stages of EAB. Tetrastichus planipennisi female wasps, which are about the size of a grain of rice, lay eggs inside EAB larvae, terminating their development into adult beetles. Oobius agrili female wasps, which are the size of a gnat, lay eggs inside EAB eggs, parasitizing them before given the opportunity to hatch. Both species are harmless to people.


More information about EAB and other pests that are threatening Iowa’s tree population, go to www.IowaTreePests.com. Please contact any of the following members of the Iowa EAB Team for further information on EAB:

- Mike Kintner, IDALS EAB coordinator, 515-745-2877, Mike.Kintner@iowaAgriculture.gov
- Robin Pruisner, IDALS state entomologist, 515-725-1470, Robin.Pruisner@iowaAgriculture.gov
- Paul Tauke, DNR state forester, 515-725-8450, Paul.Tauke@dnr.iowa.gov
- Tivon Feeley, DNR forest health coordinator, 515-725-8453, Tivon.feeley@dnr.iowa.gov
- Emma Hanigan, DNR urban forestry coordinator, 515-249-1732, Emma.Hanigan@dnr.iowa.gov
- Jesse Randall, ISU Extension and Outreach forester, 515-294-1168, Randall@iastate.edu
- Mark Shour, ISU Extension and Outreach entomologist, 515-294-5963, mshour@iastate.edu
- Laura Jesse, ISU Extension and Outreach entomologist, ISU Plant and Insect Diagnostic Clinic, 515-294-0581, ljesse@iastate.edu
- Donald Lewis, ISU Extension and Outreach entomologist, 515-294-1101, dlewis@iastate.edu
- Jeff Iles, ISU Extension and Outreach horticulturist, 515-294-3718, iles@iastate.edu

### Planting for Late Summer and Early Fall

By Richard Jauron and Kendall Evan
Iowa State University

**AMES, Iowa – Creating a beautiful, functioning landscape depends on putting the right plant in the right place at the right time.**

**When is the best time to sow grass seed in Iowa?**

Mid-August to mid-September is the best time to seed new lawns and overseed existing lawns in Iowa. A late summer seeding has several advantages over spring seeding. The seeds of cool-season grasses germinate quickly in the warm soil of late summer. The warm days and cool nights of early fall promote rapid turfgrass growth. The growing grass also has less competition from weeds as few weed seeds germinate in late summer or fall.

**Is late summer/early fall a good time to plant trees?**

Mid-August through September is an excellent time to plant pine, spruce and other evergreens. Evergreens planted in late October or November may not have adequate time to become established before the onset of winter and could be subject to desiccation, injury and death. Deciduous trees and shrubs can be planted from August through early November.

Water newly planted trees every day for three or four days and then gradually reduce the frequency of watering. When watering, slowly apply water to the rootball and the surrounding soil. A thorough watering every seven to ten days, in dry weather, should be sufficient three to four weeks after planting. Continue watering until the ground freezes.
Ask the ISU Extension Gardening Expert

When and how do I divide peonies?

September is the best time to divide peonies. By September, peony plants have been able to store adequate food reserves in their roots. Also, the replanted divisions have several weeks to get reestablished at their new sites before the onset of winter.

Begin by cutting off the peony stems near ground level. Carefully dig up the plants and wash or gently shake off the soil. Using a sharp knife, divide the clump into sections. Each section should have three to five buds (eyes) and a good root system. Divisions with fewer than three buds may take two or more years to flower. Plant the divisions in a sunny, well-drained site.

When planting, dig a hole large enough to accommodate the root system of the peony. Position the peony in the hole so the buds are one to two inches below the soil surface. (Plants may not bloom well if the buds are more than two inches deep.) Fill the hole with soil, firming the soil around the plant while backfilling. Then water thoroughly. Space peonies 3 to 4 feet apart.

Mulch newly planted peonies with several inches of straw or pine needles in late fall. Mulching prevents repeated freezing and thawing of the soil that may heave and damage young plants. Remove the mulch as growth resumes in spring.

SEPTEMBER GARDENING TO DO LIST

- Take geranium, coleus, and other annual cuttings and root them indoors.
- Continue to water newly established trees, shrubs, and perennials.
- Harvest winter squash before hard frost. Skin of the squash should be tough with deep, solid color. Some cultivars will show an orange blush when mature.
- Check trees for bagworms and fall webworms. Hand prune and destroy.
- Prepare thin and dead areas of lawn for renovation. Mid-August to mid-September is the best time of the year to seed lawns.
- Stop deadheading roses after the final wave of flowers in late September. This allows rose hips to form and plants to start hardening off for winter.
- Place orders for fall planting of spring-flowering bulbs.
- Plant spring-flowering bulbs in mid-September. Planting too early can cause bulbs to sprout top growth before winter. However, allow at least four to six weeks before the ground freezes for good root formation.
- Remove dead leaves and debris from garden ponds and water features.
- Plant balled and burlapped deciduous trees.
- Check houseplants for insect pests before bringing indoors before the first frost.
- Harvest all full-sized tomatoes and peppers before frost.
- Make homemade salsa with garden fresh ingredients!

Resources for Horticulture information

ISU’s Hortline at (515) 294-3108  
(Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-noon, 1-4:30 p.m)

ISU/Mills County Extension: 712-624-8616  
www.extension.iastate.edu/mills/yardgarden.htm

Iowa State University Publications

IDEA 2 Small Fruits: Insect and Disease Management for Backyard Fruit Growers in the Midwest
PM 453 Fruit Cultivars for Iowa
PM 0819 Planting a Home Vegetable Garden
PM 534 Planting & Harvesting Times for Garden Vegetables (Free)
PM 1890 Potatoes
PM 2084 Emerald Ash Borer Management Options

Horticulture Publications on-line
https://www.extension.iastate.edu/store/ListCategories

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