How Do I Grow a Peach Tree?

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Quick Answer

To grow a peach tree in Utah, choose a variety suited to your area, plant it in a sunny site with well-drained soil, and give it deep, regular watering. Plant peach trees in early spring or fall, and give them enough space to grow. Because late-spring freezes can damage peach flowers and young fruit, choose a protected site and a variety with the right hardiness and chill-hour requirements for your area.

When Should I Plant a Peach Tree?

Plant peach trees in early spring or fall. Summer planting is possible, but it stresses the tree more and requires careful watering.

For a bare-root tree, dig a hole wide enough to spread the roots out. Plant it deep enough to cover the roots up to the original soil line. For a potted tree, dig a hole the same depth as the root ball and twice as wide. Do not cover the graft union, which is the swollen area where the desired peach variety was joined to the rootstock.

Before planting, prepare the site by controlling perennial weeds and checking the soil. A soil pH below 8.0 and low soil salt levels produce the best results. A soil test can help you understand your soil and determine whether it needs amendments.

What Varieties of Peaches Grow Best in Utah?

Choose a peach variety based on your area's growing season, disease pressure, chill-hour requirement, and cold hardiness. Peach varieties with higher chill-hour requirements are recommended for much of Utah because warm winter spells can cause low-chill peaches to start growing too early. However, the best variety also depends on where you live in Utah.

Check out these popular cultivars:

- **Redhaven** – 950 chill hours; early/mid-season; yellow-freestone
- **Reliance** – 1,000 chill hours; early/mid-season; yellow-freestone
- **Canadian Harmony** – 750 Chill Hours; mid-season; yellow-freestone
- **O'Henry** – 750 chill hours; mid-season; yellow-freestone
- **Veteran** – 900 chill hours; mid/late-season; yellow-freestone
- **Contender** – 1,050 chill hours; mid/late- season; yellow-freestone
- **Red Globe** – 850 chill hours; early/mid-season; yellow-freestone
- **Glohaven** – 850 chill hours; mid-season; yellow-freestone
- **Early (Lemon) Elberta** – 800 chill hours; mid-season; yellow-freestone
- **Elberta** – 850 chill hours; mid/late-season; yellow-freestone
- **Belle of Georgia** – 850 chill hours; mid-season; white-freestone

Where Should I Plant a Peach Tree?

Choose a site that receives at least 8 hours of full sun each day. Avoid planting a peach tree on the south or west side of a house or other building, as late spring freezes are a concern. These locations can cause the tree to bloom early, which increases the risk of freeze damage.

Choose a somewhat sheltered location when possible. In some Utah valleys, higher bench areas have a lower risk of spring and fall freezes than valley floors.

Peaches prefer well-drained soil. Heavy clay soils can cause problems with drainage and iron availability. Incorporate organic matter into clay soil and use raised beds when needed to improve drainage and aeration.

When possible, avoid planting peach trees in lawns. Trees and lawns have different water and nutrient needs. If you plant a peach tree in turf, keep the turf at least 4 feet from the trunk in every direction.

How Much Sunlight Does a Peach Tree Need?

Peach trees need at least 8 hours of full sun each day. Avoid locations shaded by buildings or tall trees.

How Much Water Does a Peach Tree Need?

Peach trees need about 30 inches of water over the growing season. Water every 7-14 days, depending on soil type and heat, so watering is less frequent but deeper, ensuring the water reaches the entire root zone. Drip irrigation, soaker hoses, or hand watering can be used. Water should reach about 18-24 inches deep.

Newly planted trees need careful watering while they become established. Do not let young trees dry out, but avoid overwatering them. Too much water can damage roots and increase disease problems.

How to test the soil moisture by feel for new trees: Before watering, dig down 4-8 inches within the watered root zone and feel a handful of soil; a dry surface alone does not mean the tree needs water. Moist soil generally feels cool and forms a loose ball when squeezed, although sandy soil may not hold together. Dry sandy or loamy soil crumbles readily, while dry clay becomes hard. If the soil is soggy or releases water when squeezed, delay irrigation and allow it to drain. Check regularly so the root zone stays moist without remaining saturated; newly planted trees need more frequent monitoring and watering.

How Big Do Peach Trees Get?

Peach trees usually grow about 15 feet tall and 20 feet wide. However, peach tree size depends on the variety, rootstock, and pruning management.

Plan for the tree's mature size when choosing a planting site. Give the tree enough room so it does not crowd buildings, other trees, or plants. Plan to leave about 12-16 feet between peach trees, depending on the rootstock and training system.

How Do I Fertilize a Peach Tree?

Use soil and leaf analyses alongside tree growth to guide fertilizer applications. Peach shoot-growth targets are 10-24 inches annually for young trees and 8-15 inches for mature trees. General orchard nitrogen guidance is 0.01-0.04 lb actual nitrogen per tree per year of age, capped at 0.3 lb annually per tree. Peaches also need phosphorus and potassium annually, but a soil test should be performed to determine if these nutrients are needed. Many soils across Utah contain adequate amounts of phosphorus and potassium, but these nutrients will be depleted as the trees age.

References

- USU Extension — How to Grow Peaches in Your Garden
- USU Extension — Peach Varieties for Box Elder County
- USU Extension — FAQs | Fruit | Small Acreage | Production Horticulture
- USU Extension — Backyard Fruit Production in Utah’s High Mountain Valleys
- USU Extension — Fruit and Vegetable Guide Series: Peaches
- USU Extension — Intermountain Fruit Guide

Adapted from USU Extension yard and garden resources.

Contact

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