

Peach Orchard Management Calendar for Georgia

This calendar is a general guide for scheduling and conducting management practices critical for operation of high-yielding peach orchards. An in-depth discussion of each management practice is provided by reading the Peach Growers Handbook and the Southeastern Peach, Nectarine, and Plum Pest Management and Culture Guide (spray guide) available at county extension offices or on the web at http://entomology.ent.uga.edu/peach/peach_guide/title.htm

ESTABLISHMENT

Site Selection — Select fields with well-drained soil higher than surrounding areas for air drainage. In Georgia, south-facing slopes generally have 15-day earlier last frost dates than north-facing slopes. Topographical maps, spring temperature records and max-min thermometers are useful in selecting the best sites. Analyze soil for fertility. Nematode sampling is a critical part of site selection.

Order Trees — Select a quality variety with market demand on the proper rootstock. Ideally, place orders in late spring of the year before planting to ensure delivery of the desired variety-rootstock combination. Order trees from nurseries that virus test or certify their trees virus-free.

Site Preparation — Apply glyphosate for perennial weed control. Application time is weed species specific. Refer to glyphosate label to determine application time for weed species present. Perennial grasses are most susceptible when in the “boot stage” or at seed head development. Deeply incorporate dolomitic lime (to pH 6.5) and phosphorus (base on soil test). Subsoil and cross subsoil in the fall months prior to winter planting. Begin in time to allow for fumigation and fumigant dissipation.

Fumigation — PREPLANT NEMATODE CONTROL IS MORE EFFECTIVE THAN POST-PLANT TREATMENTS. When possible, preplant soil fumigation with Telone II should be completed prior to November 15, when soil temperatures and moisture are generally adequate for best results.

Planting — Early to mid-winter (December to February) planting is preferred, subject to proper soil moisture conditions and adequate time for fumigant dissipation (4–6 weeks in adequately drained soils). Plant at depth similar to nursery depth, i.e., upper roots no more than 2 inches below ground level. Apply a preemergence herbicide after a soil settling rain and prior to weed emergence. Protect young trees with shields or by painting trunks with white latex paint. Shielding of tender bark is necessary in order to safely use paraquat for summer weed control. Preplant herbicide options are limited during the first year of orchard establishment.

CULTURE

Nutrient Sampling — Take soil and foliar samples from July through mid-August. Sample the fourth fully expanded leaf back from the shoot tip. Sample soil at the 6-10 inch depth, pooling several samples taken from around the site. Take separate samples within a site if the soil has areas that differ in character.

Fertilization — Base lime and nutrient rates on a soil test. For bearing trees, split the nitrogen application in spring and post-harvest based on terminal shoot growth, foliar analysis and crop history. For bearing trees, 30 pounds of ammonium nitrate/A in spring and summer is a good starting point. In subsequent years, alter rate based on tree and crop performance. Apply nitrogen one month before anticipated bloom. If mid- to late-season leaf color is poor, or July leaf nitrogen levels are <2.75, apply nitrogen after harvest but no later than early September in Middle Georgia (M. GA) or mid-October in South Georgia (S. GA).

Pruning — Initiate major pruning in February. Earlier pruning is not recommended but, where practiced, select sites based on rootstock (Guardian™ only), orchard age (>6 years) and results of nematode samples (absence of *Mesacticonema xenoplax*). Do major pruning in February and early March, prior to petal fall. Consider use of pruning to reduce thinning costs by reducing fruiting shoot length by ¼ to ½. In bearing trees, remove suckers from spring to mid-summer and do minor pruning June through mid-September to maintain fruiting wood. Use summer training to develop young trees.

Thinning — For marketable to premium fruit size, thinning is required. Bloom thinning (before petal fall) yields larger fruit but may reduce the bud crop below a level you can afford during late frosts. Thinning typically begins 30 days after fruit set. Hand thin marble-sized fruit on early maturing varieties in April. Continue hand thinning into May on progressively later varieties.

Girdling — Complete cut (irrigated orchards) or S-cut (non-irrigated orchards) around scaffold branches with a ⅛ to ⅓" knife 35 to 40 days after full bloom (7 to 10 days before pit hardening) to increase fruit size on difficult to size varieties. Separate girdling from thinning by 3 to 4 days. Girdling is not recommended for trees under stress or for varieties that tend to crack.

Irrigation — Irrigate on an *as needed* basis, particularly just prior to and during the final swell period of fruit growth (4 to 6 weeks before harvest). Use irrigation calculator (<http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/peaches/>) to determine the appropriate period of time to run your particular irrigation system.

Harvest — Based on specific variety, harvest at optimum size as ground color changes from green to yellow (but before firmness declines below 12-13 pounds). Watch for soft tips and sutures on some varieties. For locally marketed fruit, harvest at more mature stages for optimum size and quality. Remove field heat quickly and hold fruit at 33-36 degrees F to maintain quality.

DISEASES

Bacterial Spot — Varieties which are susceptible to bacterial spot should receive copper applications during dormant through shuck split stages (diminishing rates as buds develop; see current spray guide) followed by Mycoshield applications starting at shuck split.

Phony Peach — Phony peach is most easily identified from mid-July through September. Inspect orchards and mark diseased trees during this time period for subsequent removal and destruction.

Nematode Sampling — Take samples two times a year at dates shown on calendar prior to site preparation. Place samples in a cooler during collection to prevent overheating to avoid ruining nematode samples. Collect samples in time to ensure delivery to lab prior to weekend. DO NOT take samples from dry soil. Root-knot and root-lesion nematodes are most easily identified in September-October samples and Ring nematode in February-April samples.

Nematicides — Applications of a post-plant nematicide are expensive and require reliable nematode samples to determine need. Currently, two (2) fall applications 2-4 weeks apart during mid-September to late October are preferred. However, one fall (late October) and one spring (early April) application is optional. Please note that the spring application of Nemacur 3E needs to be applied **no later than 45 days prior to harvest**. Make applications on early varieties no later than February 28 and March 30 for S. GA and M. GA, respectively. The current spray guide and product label need to be consulted for updated and additional nematicide recommendations.

Brown Rot — Blossom blight, green fruit rot and brown rot control is needed during bloom and just before harvest. Refer to current spray guide for details.

Scab — Scab control is critical from shuck split until 21 days before harvest.

INSECTS

Scale — Apply 1 to 2 dormant/delayed dormant oil sprays to every acre. If needed, apply Esteem or an organophosphate insecticide with delayed application of dormant oil prior to budbreak. Apply an organophosphate insecticide as needed after harvest for white peach or San Jose scale crawlers. In M. GA the key times to begin scouting for scale crawlers are: 4/1, 5/20, 7/20, 8/20 and 9/20.

Catfacing Insects — Petal fall through the third cover spray is very important for early-season catfacing control. Superior control can be achieved by augmenting insecticide sprays with chemical mowing of the orchard floor. A season-long spray program is needed to control plum curculio. Heavy infestations of tarnished plant bug or stinkbug justify closer spray intervals or additional alternate row middle sprays.

Borers — In S. GA, addition of organophosphate insecticide to dormant oil application for scale improves early season borer control. Make a handgun application of Lorsban immediately after harvest (S. GA) and the first week of August, but after harvest (M. GA). Borer control is crucial in young trees.

WEEDS

Control weeds in the tree row, taking care to maintain a weedy/grassy middle to prevent erosion during rainy periods.

Preemergence — Apply herbicides for winter weed control from 10/1-11/15. Applications for summer annual weed control should be made from 2/15-4/15 [Preferred time is: a) S. GA – 2/15-3/1; b) M. GA – 3/1-3/15]. Spring applications may be delayed several weeks if a preemergence herbicide was applied in the fall.

Postemergence — Control emerged winter annual weeds growing on the orchard floor about 4 weeks prior to bloom. 2,4-D amine is commonly used for winter annual broadleaf weed control during this time. In the event a fall preemergence was applied, only the area in the drive row will need to be treated. Apply postemergence herbicides with preemergence herbicides for control of emerged weeds. During the summer, postemergence herbicides may be used to control escaped summer annual weeds. Glyphosate and paraquat are both commonly used during the spring and summer for postemergence weed control. In the event glyphosate is used, remember to follow all label precautions or serious injury may occur. Precautions include USE OF A SHIELDED OR HOODED SPRAYER, NO APPLICATION 90 DAYS PAST BLOOM, REMOVAL OF SUCKERS AND LOW LIMBS AT LEAST 10 DAYS PRIOR TO APPLICATION AND KEEP GLYPHOSATE OFF PEACH TREE BARK AND FOLIAGE. DO NOT SPRAY GLYPHOSATE AROUND TREES YOUNGER THAN THIRD LEAF. Perennial grass weeds, like bermudagrass, are very competitive and have to be controlled with Fusilade or Poast to prevent yield reduction. Apply Fusilade or Poast to bermudagrass with 4" to 8" of new growth in the spring followed by a second application when regrowth occurs. See labels for rate information and other details.

MAINTENANCE

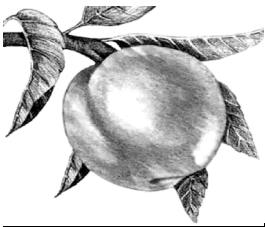
Sprayers — Orchard spray equipment should be kept in top working condition, at all times. Replace worn pumps, gauges, and nozzles during the off-season. Check calibration or boom sprayers frequently (every 8-10 hrs of operation). Check air blast sprayers at the first of the season and at spray season midpoint unless problems arise.

Packing Equipment — During the off-season, inspect packing lines for worn bearings, belts and other parts. Replace if necessary. Inspect refrigeration and all packing equipment before and during the packing season to ensure smooth, continuous operation. Maintain clean brushes and rollers and proper hydrocooler water chemistry [pH 6.5, 100 ppm chlorine] throughout the packing season to reduce equipment wear and improve food safety.

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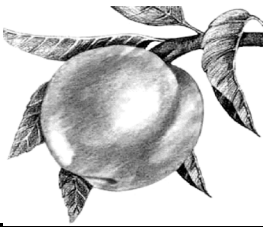
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Peach Orchard Management

Calendar for Georgia



	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
ESTABLISHMENT												
Site Selection												
Order Trees												
Site Preparation												
Lime & Phosphorus Amendment												
Preplant Fumigation												
Planting												
CULTURE												
Nutrient Sample												
Fertilization												
Pruning												
Thinning												
Girdling												
Irrigation												
Harvest												
DISEASES												
Bacterial Spot												
Phony Peach												
Nematode Sample												
Postplant Nematicides												
Brown Rot												
Scab												
INSECTS												
Scale												
Catfacing Insects												
Plum Curculio												
Lesser Borer												
Borer												
WEEDS												
Preemergence												
Postemergence												
MAINTENANCE												
Sprayers												
Packing Equipment												

South Georgia

Middle Georgia

Preferred Time –

Optional Time –