

Home Orchard Care

Clemson Extension Service is a must source for info. Mine is kinda' anecdotal after being about this for so many years. =) Clemson has recently redesigned their website and I am providing a link to their Fact Sheets. Please search for the tree or shrub that you are interested in.

- <https://hgic.clemson.edu/all-factsheets/>

Also, there is a trend towards an organic approach that involves wrapping each peach and using Diatomaceous earth for pests. I am not an expert in that area but it might be for you.

The links I provide are just recommended examples to give you a little more direction.

Here ya' go with my experiences:

SPACING

- Layout your orchard in blocks that have trees on 20-foot centers and of course FULL sun.
- A good layout will give plenty of sun and air circulation and make it much easier to maintain.

STOCK

- Only plant bare root stock.
- You pay for what you get so just go ahead and make the decision to buy bare root whips from Stark Brothers. (No, this is not an ad for them but a great source and a great resource!) Yes, mail order but "the good stuff" and ships well.
 - <https://www.starkbros.com/>
- Do not get sticker shock. Do not try to compare to the stock at Lowe's , etc. You will have way too much work into your home orchard that buying bargain stock and stock too big or too etc. will be your real waste of money.
- Thoroughly study the Stark's site for characteristics of varieties, size, and pollination requirements. A great resource.
- Only buy the dwarf or semi-dwarf varieties so you can "get your hands around" the trees. 8-10 foot max height.
- Have Starks' pre-prune or have the courage to cut the whips in 1/2 when you get them. Don't worry, these bare root whips will take off and quickly surpass the root ball stock at the stores.
- Realize that Apples have quirky pollination needs. Most do not self-pollinate and require other varieties to pollinate. Stark's is a wonderful source to check on this need.

- We like pies and applesauce and cut apples in salads. We like crunchy apples. Realize that you will never be able to take care of the fruit well enough to make perfect grocery store looking apples. You want apples that have taste and many uses and so the blemish-free characteristics are not a mandatory requirement.
- I recommended that you plant a mixture of Jon-A-Red, Black Arkansas and Wine Sap and all dwarf variety.
- For Peaches also study the Starks' site and catalog.
- You will love the taste, size and growing habits of Redhaven. You might check out the catalog but your "go to" variety is Redhaven.
 - <https://www.starkbros.com/products/fruit-trees/peach-trees/redhaven-peach>

PLANTING

- Follow all the usual advice on size of hole and amendments, etc.
- At bottom of your hole make a mound and then spread the bare roots over the mound. This will insure that no air pockets will be around new roots.
- Now this is critical. Make sure the fill dirt is in the wheelbarrow or on a tarp off to the side so true ground level is exposed. Then place a straight edge across the hole and position the tree so the graft is just above ground level. Then fill in after repositioning the tree over the mound. Keep the straight edge in place. Flood the hole with water and jiggle the tree around to be sure that the graft doesn't sink as the dirt compacts. Keeping the graft at the right height is important.
- Deer love new trees and new leaves and blooms. There is no escaping it. They will eat the whole shebang. So, you gotta' place a hog wire circle of mesh around the tree up to 4 feet to protect it. And not a small fence but one about 4 feet in diameter. Hold in place with some rebar stakes. You can remove several years down the road. Deer will love to destroy your \$\$\$ whips. So don't omit the fence as part of the planting process. And don't think that you can do this later! Do it the same day you plant. If you wait 'till the day after then you proly will have nothing to protect.

MAINTENANCE

OK, I have saved the hardest news for last. Fruit trees are a 12-month TLC exercise. Just forget planting them at all if you don't have time or discipline to tend to them. =)

- You need to prune in January. I could write a lot on pruning but the main idea is to remove dead and dying as you do not have to think. Then remove anything growing towards the middle of the canopy. Then remove anything that is rubbing on another branch.
- For peaches, you just gotta' remove 1/2 of the new growth else the limbs will be leggy and bend over with peaches and break. Don't think that you are losing peach buds as you will have to thin like crazy anyway. Less is more. (My mantra is remove Dead & Dying then Green & Growing But Not Wanted.)

- More on peaches. You want lateral growth and not vertical growth. So have the courage to cut off those limbs growing straight up from a lateral limb. You want to encourage lateral growth so on those limbs pay attention to the location of the vegetative buds and direction they are facing. Then make your snips so that those buds are gonna' grow limbs sideways and outward.
- Before moving on to another tree, spray your loppers and side cut shears (do not use anvil cut shears) with a product like Clorox Disinfecting Cleaner without bleach which comes in a handy spray bottle. At Amazon.
 - <https://a.co/d/0kjiu7y>
- Spray while still dormant a copper sulphate liquid to help out with fungal rot much later in the growing season.
 - <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00BSULSHA>
- Also, spray Summer Oil , but not the same week as the copper sulphate, while dormant. Summer Oil is not a pesticide but it basically “smothers” insects and larvae.
 - <https://a.co/d/7a25IDl>
- Now, if you are adverse to pesticides, then do not plant the trees. Peaches (the fruit AND the tree) are not viable without chemical help. Period! You do not have to use the bad chemicals and the intense spray schedule of a commercial orchard but you DO HAVE TO SPRAY.
- Let's talk about spraying mechanics. For your small orchard a good Gilmour hose end sprayer is fine. If you do not have a water line near the orchard then run one. You can't do without water. Pump up sprayers are not gonna' work down the road when the trees get bigger. But for one or two trees a pump up sprayer will be fine..
 - <https://a.co/d/d9EriHw>
 - <https://a.co/d/72rzZGs>
- Let's talk about personal protection spraying anything. Yes, long sleeves and I wear a rain suit as well. In addition to long sleeves, wear a pair of those long dishwashing gloves and a pair of goggle type side shield safety glasses Masking up is essential when spraying anything. I do not mean a cloth mask but a respirator mask. Not a huge investment but you just gotta' protect yourself.
 - <https://a.co/d/5sR1N9V>
- Yes, you are going to look like a Martian invader and it will take time to get suited up but forget fruit trees if you are not willing to protect yourself.
- For canopy spraying, all of the good mixtures of Captain and Malathion and Carbaryl are off the market for home use. So, you gotta' go with the Bonide replacement product for the insects. Use Bonide Fruit Tree & Plant Guard.
 - <https://bonide.com/product/fruit-tree-plant-guard-conc>
- For extra protection for black spotting and the inevitable oozing jelly like rot, then you are going to have to use a cover spray that contains Captan 50% wettable powder. . Mix that one separately and apply after fruit is thumb size and again 1 month later.
 - <https://a.co/d/75rpt9S>

- You must spray to have any hope of having fruit that is not oozing jelly like stuff and having rotting flesh (peaches). You also are helping to keep the dreaded peach tree borer from taking hold of the woody structure. (sure, sign is oozing jelly from the trunk and limbs.)
- So, for the home orchard, spray the peaches when the buds are just swollen but not flowered. Spray again after petal fall (protect the bees). The spray about once per month. Spray the apples while you are at it.
- I must give equal space to the emerging practice of “bagging” each peach to protect it.
 - <https://www.clemson.edu/extension/peach/commercial/diseases/clemson-fruit-bags.html#:~:text=Protection%20for%20peaches%20from%20rot,specialty%20markets%20and%20premium%20pricing>.
- Now the apples have a pest just as bad as the borers that will kill the tree. Google up Fire Blight and pay attention. A fungus rolls in about bloom time for apples. The blooms will shrivel up almost overnight and curl over and turn black (like they are burned) and bend over like a shepherds hook. And the limbs will also turn black and die back. Don't think you can escape it. It's going to happen. So, you need a special wettable powder for fire blight. In fact, it is a non-medical grade streptomycin.
 - <https://a.co/d/9i3GnNc>
- Follow the directions but you need to be spraying when the buds pop into bloom and again about one week later. As long as the tree is in bloom stage.

UhOh! No rest for the weary. Now you got to thin the peaches. After fruit is set and you are out of frost danger, then you gotta' go to each tree and ruthlessly remove the BB to marble size fruit. Maybe wait until after the May Fall when the tree will on its own try to reduce fruit load. Space out the fruit to about 6 inches. If you do not do this then your fruit will be small and you will proly have massive limb breakage. When I say ruthless, I mean 75 % of the small fruit.

- Then just stay on your spray schedule.
- In the fall after the fruit is harvested, you will need to spray a concentrated dose of malathion on the trunks and scaffold limbs of the trees.
 - <https://a.co/d/d3b8fx>
- The spray should create a white milky appearance as you spray. You are doing this to help with the borers. Prevention is the key. A pump-up sprayer is fine for this.
- In December and when in full dormancy, spray the limbs and trunks with what is called Summer Oil. It's just mineral oil and it coats eggs and larvae and “suffocates” the buggers. Then your bug problem later is greatly reduced.
 - <https://a.co/d/cTQY7tg>

- Let's talk about peach tree borers. When you see the jelly like ooze from a trunk, then the tree is gonna' be in trouble and spray is not gonna' kill the bug that is now in the tree structure. You have one last desperate measure. Take your portable drill with a 1/4-inch bit and center at the source of the ooze and drill about 1 inch into the tree. Then dropper in some undiluted insecticide that you use for the trunk spraying. You have a good chance of saving the tree.
- You will need protective gear when spraying. I like to wear a plastic shower cap on my head and then a face shield or safety goggles, Add a mask respirator type air filter.
 - <https://a.co/d/5sR1N9V>
- Buy a rain suit from the hardware store and put it on and put the hood over all the gear and use kitchen sink type latex gloves. Rinse off the suit and gloves and store away for next time.
 - <https://www.acehardware.com/departments/home-and-decor/apparel/raingear/8101362>

Enjoy the fruits of your labors!