

My Family's Peach Farm



Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College
Advanced Agricultural Publications Class



The Peach Farmer

Be grateful for the farmers
Who love to grow and teach;
Especially those whose labors
Give us the sweet Georgia Peach!

There's a reason we're the Peach State,
Our peaches outshine the rest.
All who have tasted the fruit from our trees,
Will tell you they are surely the best.

They don't come easy the farmer admits,
There are risks in growing this crop.
Will the cold be our friend or our foe this year?
Will insects cause growing to stop?

We plan best we can for a harvest that's strong,
Then start over again when we're done,
So you'll have the joy of eating the best peach
That our hands and our hearts could have grown.

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Destination Ag at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College
to advance agriculture literacy in Georgia

Project Partners:



Georgia Peach Council





PEARSON¹ FARM

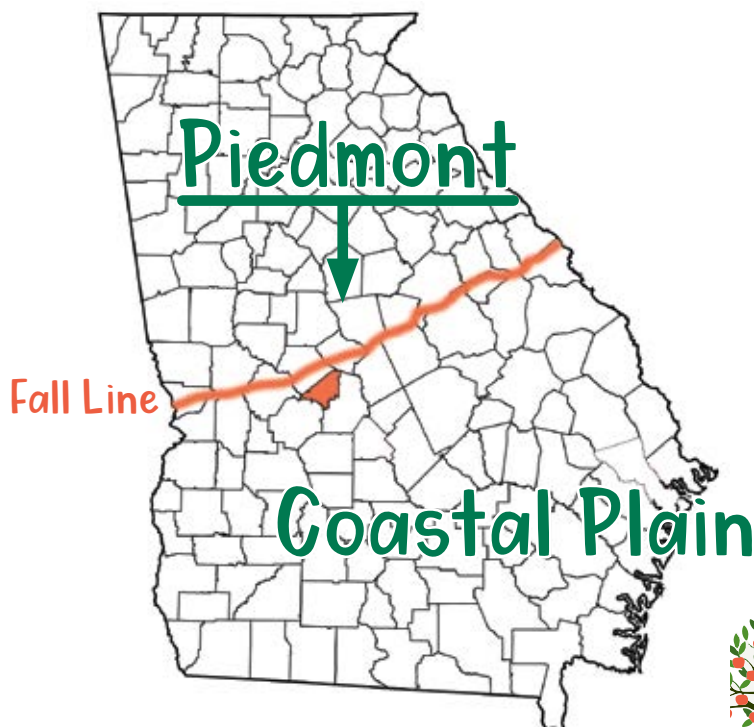
SINCE 1885

Hi!

My name is Cort and I live in Fort Valley, Georgia. My family has been growing peaches on its Peach County farm for more than 130 years.

What is a "peach farm"?

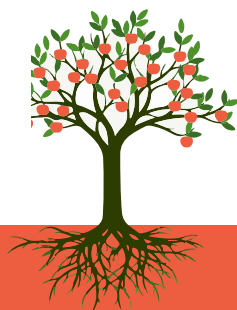
A peach farm is an area of land specially prepared for growing and harvesting peaches. Our family's peach farm is 1800 acres and grows many different kinds of peaches.



Growing Deeper

Harvesting: the process of gathering crops from the orchard or field.

Georgia grows 130 million pounds of peaches per year, but California and South Carolina grow more.



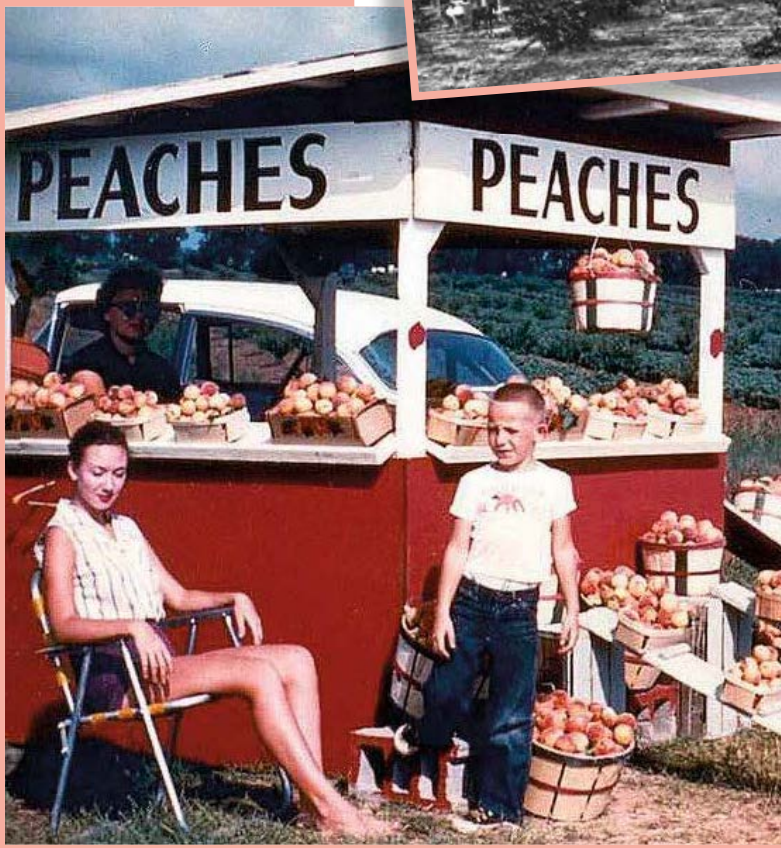


It all began in 1885 when my great, great grandparents, Moses Winlock and Cornelia Emory Pearson, began growing peaches in Fort Valley. The farm has been in the family for five generations! Today, the farm is owned by my dad and my grandfather.

A lot has changed since we picked our first peach! The one thing that has stayed the same is my family's love for growing sweet Georgia peaches. We love sharing them with others.



Days
Gone By...



Peach trees need a special ecosystem to grow healthy, delicious peaches. A great environment for peach trees includes the right temperature and soil.

Our farm in middle Georgia is in a perfect spot for growing peaches. Growing peaches in a warm area protects the trees from being damaged and losing fruit to a frost or freeze.

The soil that the trees grow in is also important. Our farm's sandy loam soil provides a great home for the roots of the peach trees because water moves through it easily and roots can grow deeper.



Growing Deeper

Peaches require 'chill hours' which are times with temperatures between 32 and 45 degrees Fahrenheit to grow. Most trees need between 600 and 1,000 chill hours. Without this period of rest, the buds that were set the previous summer can't blossom.

And if there are no blossoms — you guessed it, no fruit!

Peaches require chill hours to grow, though temperatures that dip below freezing can harm the quality of the crop. Peach trees bloom in early to mid-March, so late-season freezes can damage the crop.

Ecosystem: a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment.

Ecosystem





Peaches, like other crops, need water to grow. It normally rains a lot in spring, so we don't have to water the peach trees as much as we do in summer. During March and April, the peaches grow from a little flower into a peach the size of a golf ball.

In the summer, two to three weeks before they are harvested, or picked, the trees are given extra water through a **drip tape** that is buried under the soil. This process is called **irrigation**.



Growing Deeper

The average lifespan of a peach tree is 12 to 15 years. Peach trees do not bear fruit in their first two years.

Irrigation: the supply of water to land or crops to help growth

To irrigate one acre, we use...



10 gallons of water



per acre

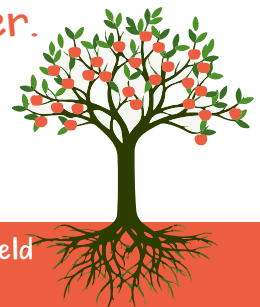


per minute

When we water the trees, we use about 10 gallons of water per acre per minute. One acre is almost the size of one football field. Ten gallons of water is equal to 80 sixteen ounce bottles of water.

Growing Deeper

Acre: a unit of measuring land, about the size of a football field



We want to grow as many peaches as possible. Farmers **prune** the trees to help. Pruning is cutting away dead or overgrown branches. Sunlight can get to the center of the tree after it is pruned. Peaches need a lot of sun to grow properly.



Pruning also lets the peaches grow lower on the tree so they can be picked by hand. Farmers use a tool called pruning shears to cut the unwanted branches off the trees.



Growing Deeper

Pruning: trimming a tree by cutting away dead or overgrown branches to let in more sun and increase fruitfulness and growth

China began growing peaches more than 4,000 years ago and today is the largest world producer of peaches, with Italy second.

The first peach orchard in the United States was in Florida

Peach Tree Pruning



Nature provides the most important thing for growing peaches and other crops. It's called **pollination**. Fruit trees would not make fruit without pollination.

Pollination occurs when insects or wind move tiny grains of **pollen** from one flower to another. Pollen causes the flower to produce a tree's fruit. Inside the fruit is a seed. This seed can be planted to become a new tree.

Insects, like honey bees, are the most important pollinators in our peach orchards. Bees are attracted to the peach blossom by its sweet **nectar**. They also use that nectar to make the honey we love to eat.



Growing Deeper

Peaches, along with the plum and apricot, are members of the rose family.

Pollination: a very important part of the life cycle of plants. Insects, birds and the wind take pollen between flowering plants, which means the plants can make seeds and reproduce (have babies!).

Pollen: the substance that causes plants to form seeds. New plants then can grow from the seeds. A grain of pollen is so tiny that it is best viewed through a microscope.

Nectar: a very sweet liquid made by the flowers of plants. Plants make nectar to attract pollinating insects like bees. This means the insects trying to get the nectar have to touch the parts of the plant that are used for reproduction.

Packing Shed



Pollination



Sometimes **pests**, like deer or insects, damage our peaches. A pest is anything that can hurt the tree or the peach. Some insects attack the tree and not the peach. They can kill our trees.

Peaches can be attacked by insects, such as **scales**, that suck the juice out of the branches of the trees. Scales don't cause a lot of damage in fruit. Sometimes scales do affect how the peaches look.

Some insects lay eggs inside the peach. The egg turns into a worm. These are very difficult to remove.

We control harmful pests in ways that keep our peaches safe, protect the environment, and protect our workers.



Growing Deeper

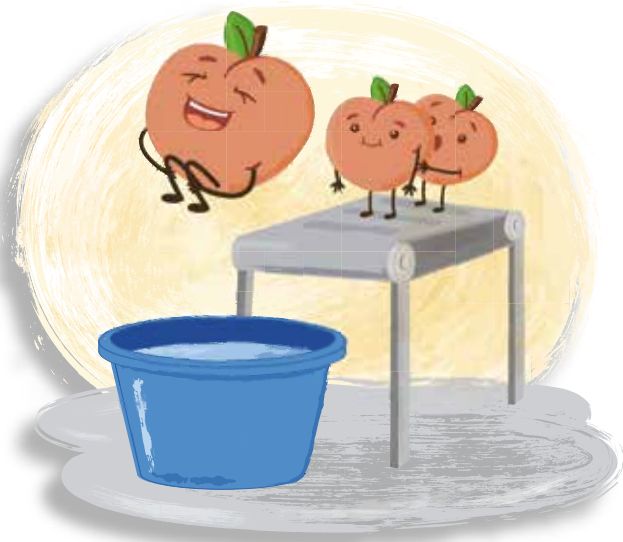
Pests: a destructive insect or other animal that attacks crops, food or livestock

Scale bug: a tiny insect that sucks the plant juices from twigs, branches, fruit and leaves



Peach Pests





Peaches are picked by hand and placed in large wagons. Tractors pull the wagons from the orchard to the packing shed.

In the packing shed, the peaches are put in a cold-water bath for about 30 minutes.

The cool bath removes the heat that the peaches had in the field. This slows the ripening process so peaches are not too ripe when customers buy them in the store.





After the peaches are cooled, they travel through a machine that sorts them into boxes by grades.

The peaches only stay in the packing shed for a few hours before they are shipped to our customers.

Our peaches can even be ordered online!

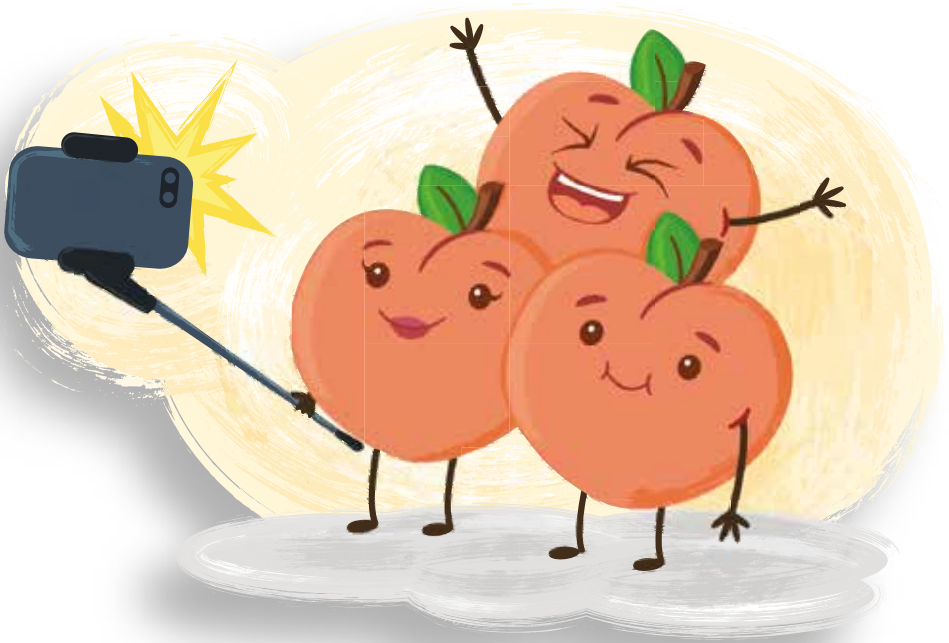
It only takes a few hours for peaches to be ready to be shipped after they are harvested!



Growing Deeper

Grading: a sorting process that places peaches into categories according to shape, size, color and volume to determine price and type of customer they will be shipped to

Grading



In the packing shed, a camera inside a machine takes a picture of each peach and gives it a grade.

Once the peaches are graded, they are put into boxes and delivered to our customers, like grocery stores, restaurants, and farmers' markets.



Peaches are a Healthy Snack



Peaches are a tasty, healthy snack. They contain many things that are good for us, including Vitamin C. During the summer, when there are lots of fresh peaches, it is a good idea to freeze them for fall and winter. Washing, peeling, and freezing peaches preserve their taste and nutritional value. You can make many different things using peaches. Some of my favorites are jam, pound cake, cobbler, ice cream, and smoothies.

Try these peachy treats some time...

Peach Ice Cream

Ingredients:

- 2 cups heavy whipping cream
- 115oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 4-6 peeled, diced or pureed peaches
- 1 teaspoon vanilla (optional)

Directions:

- Add whipping cream to a chilled mixing bowl. Beat on high until stiff peaks form.
- The consistency will be similar to whipped cream.
- Carefully fold in the sweetened condensed milk and vanilla.
- Chop peaches in a food processor to your preferred size.
- Fold peaches into the whipped cream mixture.
- Pour into a medium-sized loaf pan.
- Top with plastic wrap and chill for at least 8 hours, or overnight.

Strawberry Peach Smoothie

Ingredients:

- 1 cup sliced fresh strawberries
- 1 cup sliced fresh, or frozen, peaches
- 1 cup vanilla yogurt
- 1 tablespoon milk

Directions:

- Place the strawberries, peaches, yogurt, and milk in a blender.
- Cover and blend.
- Serve in chilled glasses.



Growing Deeper

Did you know that you can ripen peaches by placing them in a brown paper bag for two to three days?

Nutrition: Nutrition includes all the stuff that's in your food, such as vitamins, protein, fat, and more. It's important to eat a variety of foods, including fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and grains, so you have what you need to grow and be healthy.

Peach Farm Glossary

DRIP TAPE – used for irrigation to allow water to drip slowly to the roots of plants, either from above the soil surface or buried below the surface

ECOSYSTEM – A community of interacting organisms and their environment. Ecosystems often contain many living things and can be as small as your backyard or as large as the ocean

ENVIRONMENT – All our surroundings including the air, soil, water, plants, and animals

GRADING – A sorting process that places peaches into categories according to size, shape, color, and volume

HARVESTING – The process or period of gathering in crops

IRRIGATION – The supply of water to land or crops to help plants grow

LOAM – a soil having the appropriate amount of silt, clay, and sand for good plant growth

NUTRITIONAL – Includes everything in your food, such as vitamins, protein, fat and more. It's important to eat a variety of foods, including fruits, vegetables, dairy products and grains so that you have what you need to grow and be healthy.

ORCHARD – A piece of land planted with fruit trees

PACKING SHED – A shed that handles packing and shipping of peaches and other agricultural products

PEST – A destructive insect or other animal that attacks crops, food, and livestock

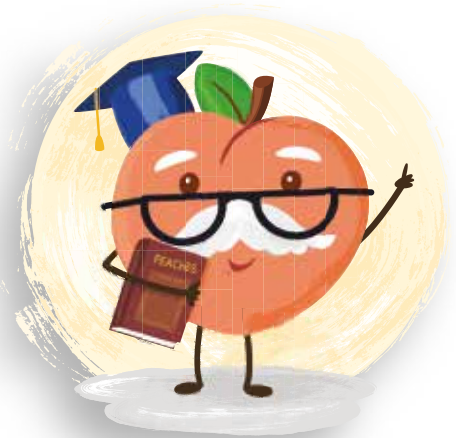
PRUNE – To trim a tree by cutting away dead or overgrown branches to let in more sun and increase fruitfulness and growth

RIPENING – The process of being full-grown and ready to eat

SCALES – Tiny insects that suck the plant juices from twigs, branches, fruit and foliage

Fun Facts about Peaches

- ▶ The 'Peach State' is the nickname for Georgia.
- ▶ The world's largest peach cobbler is made every year in Georgia. The cobbler measures 11 feet by 5 feet!
- ▶ August is National Peach Month.
- ▶ Peaches are picked by hand from the trees.
- ▶ A large peach has fewer than 70 calories and contains only 3 grams of fat.
- ▶ Georgia's peach industry is concentrated in Crawford, Peach, Taylor and Macon counties, far enough north to receive sufficient winter chilling, but far enough south to avoid late frosts and guarantee early harvest dates.
- ▶ Fresh Georgia peaches are available only 16 weeks each year, from mid-May to August.
- ▶ Christopher Columbus brought peach seeds to the new world on his second and third trips.
- ▶ The peach is a member of the rose family.
- ▶ Franciscan monks introduced peaches to St. Simons and Cumberland Islands along Georgia's coast in 1571.
- ▶ By the mid-1700s, peaches and plums were cultivated by the Cherokee Indians.
- ▶ The first peaches were planted in Georgia in the 18th century. The first commercial production did not occur until the mid-19th century.
- ▶ Georgia ranks third nationally in acres devoted to growing peaches.



Peaches by the Numbers



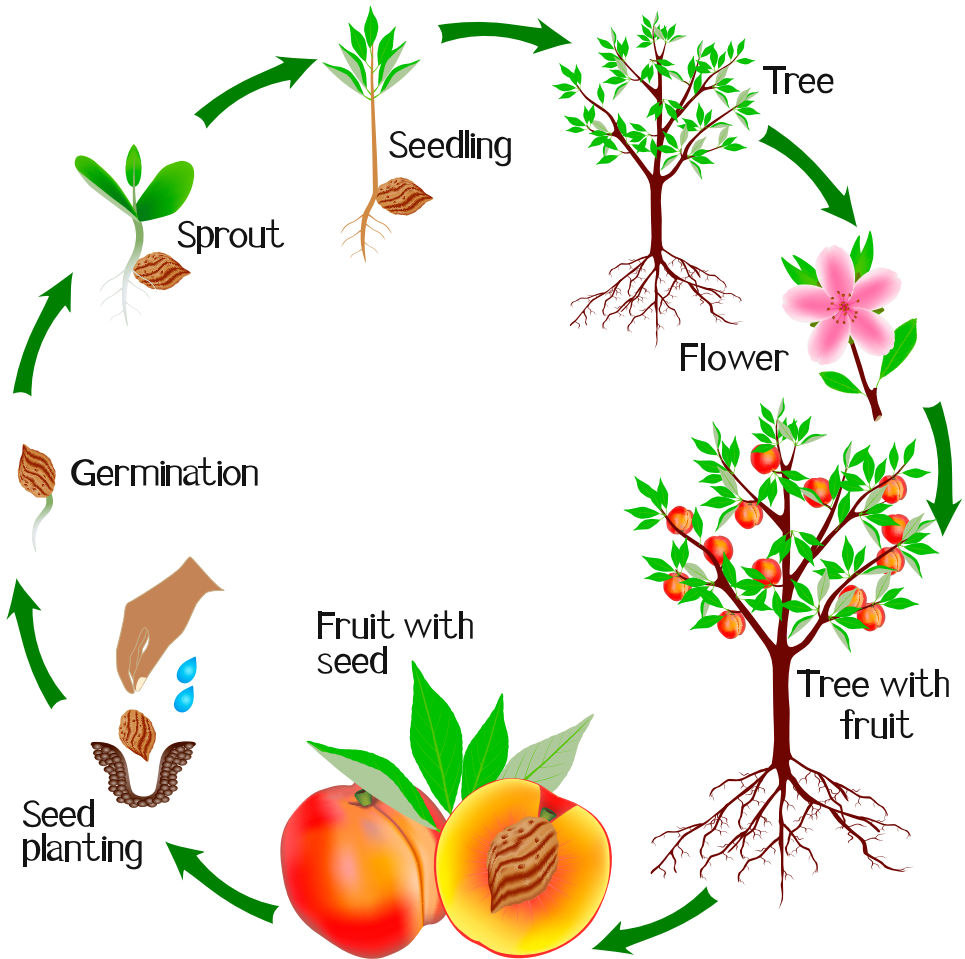
- ▶ Peach trees to an acre 136
- ▶ Peaches produced per tree 400
- ▶ Wagons filled each day 75
- ▶ Buckets in a wagon 120
- ▶ Peaches in a bucket 80
- ▶ Average weight of a single peach 1/2 pound



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Special recognition and thanks go to the 2019 Spring Semester Ag Communications class at ABAC for designing and compiling My Family's Peach Farm. This publication will contribute significantly to the agricultural literacy of thousands of Georgia's elementary students.

Life Cycle of a Peach





Cort wants to take you on a tour of his family's Georgia peach farm. He will share the story of the farm that has been in his family for more than 130 years. The family's hard work and love of farming produces some of the sweetest, most popular peaches found anywhere.



This book is a project of Destination Ag at
Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, Tifton, GA
www.abac.edu/destinationag