



PLANT FACT SHEET

Prunus persica (L.) Batsch

GENUS *Prunus* FAMILY Rosaceae

COMMON NAMES Peach

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Seeds, Flowers, Gum, Leaves

Ripe fruit are eaten fresh, preserved or made into wine. They are canned, stuffed, made into jam and juice and used in cakes, pies and pickles.

The seed oil is used for cooking.

CAUTION: The bitter kinds of apricot kernels contain amygdalin which releases cyanide and is poisonous unless removed by cooking.

The leaves are used as a yeast starter in bread making.

DESCRIPTION

A small tree. It loses its leaves during the year. It grows 3-8 m tall. It has an open growth habit. The leaves have stalks. These are 5-10 mm long. The leaves are oblong to sword shaped. They have fine teeth along the edge. The leaf blades are 7-15 cm long and 2-3 cm wide. They are acute at the base and taper to the tip. The flowers occur singly. They appear before the leaves. The flowers are small and pink or white. The fruit varies in shape and size. It is round with a groove down the side. It is 5-8 cm across. It is yellow when ripe. It has one hard stone inside with holes in it. There are a very large number of cultivated varieties.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It is native to China. They need a specific cold requirement below 7°C to start flowers and leaves forming but a warm period for fruit ripening. Some low chill varieties are available. It likes a warm sheltered position. It will tolerate mild frosts. Mild hot summers and cool cold winters are best. In Nepal it grows between 1100-2000 m altitude. Some varieties can be grown in some highland regions in the tropics if the leaves are picked off. It needs a pH between 5.7-6.9. In Argentina it grows between 1,000-2,000 m above sea level. It suits hardiness zones 5-10. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is easily grown from seed. It can be budded. Trees can be grown from seed but do not breed true. It is better to graft. Branches which have borne fruit should be removed to allow new fruit bearing wood to grow.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Budded trees commence fruiting in 2 or 3 years. Useful bearing takes 8-10 years. Trees often need zinc and borax sprays. Trees tend to be fairly short lived (20 years).

NOTES

There are about 200 *Prunus* species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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