



Texas Cooperative

# EXTENSION

The Texas A&M University System

## Gulf Coast Fruit Study Newsletter

Volume 16, Issue 1

Edited By: Ethan Natelson

July 23, 2002 Meeting

### **Planning Committee:**

Carol Cammack  
Yvonne Gibbs  
George McAfee  
Ethan Natelson  
David Parish  
Bob Randall

### **Peach Rootstocks**

The most commonly used peach rootstocks in the United States are **Nemaguard**, **Nemared**, **Guardian**, **Lovell** and **Halford**. Many plum-based rootstocks will also support peaches but because of long-term compatibility problems, are seldom utilized in commercial peach orchards. **Lovell** and **Halford** are not nematode resistant and for this reason are not useful here in the Houston area. Bill Rhode, who has supplied us with plant material for many years, has promoted peaches budded on **Okinawa** hybrid seedlings, which produce a tree slightly smaller than those on **Nemaguard**, and also has some nematode resistance.

A problem throughout the South is the peach tree short life syndrome (**PTSL**). While not a problem for those selling plants, it is a limitation for the orchardist and serious amateur peach grower. **PTSL** is caused by a number of factors including cold damage, bacterial canker, ring nematodes, peach tree

borers and insufficient liming of acid soils. There has been some interest in new peach rootstocks to improve the bearing lifespan of these trees in the South (generally thought of as 10-12 years, in Houston).

The peach rootstock, **Guardian**, was released in 1994 and has been used widely in the Southeast where it outperforms and has more cold resistance than **Nemaguard**. It is claimed to be the rootstock most resistant to **PTSL**. **Flordaguard** is a new release which is also resistant to nematodes but is very low chill. This might limit its suitability in colder climates but potentially could improve the performance of peach and nectarine cultivars which are at our upper limits of chill and should be evaluated here. There also are a number of new peach-almond hybrid rootstocks including **Hansen** and **Titian Hybrids** under trial

throughout the United States. These should be less useful here because of their poor tolerance to very wet soils. In our area it is most helpful to make a berm for your peach tree about 2 feet above the soil line. This will help to improve water drainage. The trunk of the new tree should also be painted about 2 feet up with a white latex paint to help thwart attacking peach tree borers.

We have many peach and nectarine cultivars that do well in our area but be prepared to pay some attention to these trees in terms of planting, pruning, thinning of fruit and spray schedules for the various pests if you plan to have the best quality fruit. Unfortunately, stone fruits in our area are not as well suited as other fruits for the lazy gardener.

### **Upcoming Meetings of Interest:**

The annual Southern Fruit Fellowship meeting will be held in Ruston, LA on June 20-22, 2002.

### **Current Meeting:**

We are fortunate, indeed, to have as our speaker **Dr. David H. Byrne**, Professor of Prunus and Rosa Breeding and Genetics at Texas A&M, who will speak on Peach breeding in Texas and new varieties and new peach rootstocks under trial in Texas. Our program will begin at 7:00 p.m. on **July 23, 2002** at the Extension offices at the Bear Creek Facility.

### **Contact Us!**

Harris Cty Extension Service  
2 Abercrombie Road  
Houston, TX 77080  
Phone: 281/855-5611  
Fax: 281/855-5638

## The Lorette Pruning System for Apples and Pears

Today, most commercial orchardists seek precocious rootstocks that support early and heavy fruit production on dwarf or semi-dwarfing rootstocks. This allows dense planting schemes which lend themselves to various trellising techniques, drip irrigation and easy harvesting. One may also maintain size-controlled trees on standard rootstocks yet maintain heavy fruit production by employing the unusual pruning system devised in France by Louis Lorette, 100 years ago (see Good Fruit Growers Magazine,

April 15, 2000, pg. 41 and <http://home.earthlink.net/~piper3/fruitref.html>). Essentially, this system involves heavy summer pruning done primarily in June-July, removing many newly formed branches by cutting them back close to their base. This directs the growing energy of the tree into dormant buds at the base of each shoot, diverting what would have been a vegetative bud into a flowering spur (see Figure). Such short laterals give good support to the fruit which is larger than that

formed at the tips of longer branches. Thus, with this system, the usual winter pruning is not done, in favor of summer pruning, but the trees remain healthy and productive.

This system is also not for the lazy gardener, since pruning is intensive and care must be taken not to distort the shape of the tree or to introduce infection. For those with limited space, however, this may be a very useful system for inducing early bearing and heavier fruit production.



Figure: Fruiting Spur

Figure: Summer pruning: Arrows point to limbs removed.

## Demonstration Orchards

Modern computer-driven programs enable the homeowner to visualize an endless variety of arrangements of small plants and shrubbery in the landscape, as well as view how adjacent trees might appear in various seasons and at successive stages of their development into a mature tree. Similarly, the demonstration orchards of the Harris and Ft. Bend County Extension Services allow those interested specifically

in fruiting trees a chance to see which species and which cultivars might be best suited for their properties. They also allow for repeated visits to see which can withstand and flourish under our local weather conditions, as well as provide the opportunity to taste the end result. The extension agents, master gardeners and individuals such as George McAfee, who have contributed their grafting skills, have spent many hours in order

to display favored varieties which are often not widely propagated or even available commercially. Here you might find unusual pears such as the **Florida 58-45, Acres Home** and **Henderson** as well as a variety of interesting citrus. We encourage all to make use of these unique collections and to learn by others' mistakes. You will still have plenty of time to make your own.

### ***Fresh Peach Cobbler (yield: 6 servings):***

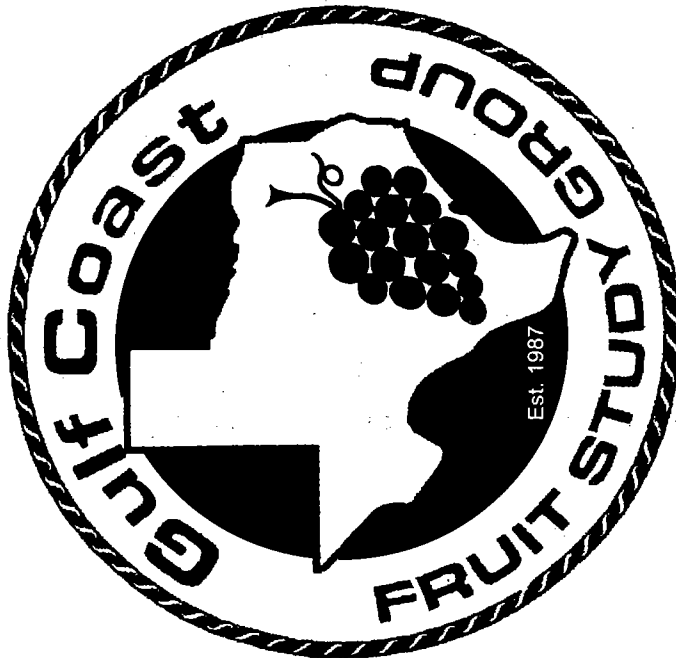
Ingredients:	1/2 cup sugar	1 cup flour
	1 T. cornstarch	1 T. sugar
	1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg	1 1/2 T. baking powder
	4 cups peeled fresh or canned peaches, drained	1/2 tsp. salt
	1 tsp. lemon juice	3 T. shortening
		1/2 cup milk

1. Heat oven to 400F. Mix 1/2 cup sugar, cornstarch and nutmeg in a 2 qt. saucepan. Stir in peaches and lemon juice. Cook over medium heat until mixture thickens and boils. Boil and stir 1 minute.
2. Pour into ungreased 2 quart casserole dish. Stir together the flour, baking powder, 1 T sugar and salt. Add the shortening and cut through with a fork until flour clings to shortening. Add milk. Form into a ball. Drop mixture by 6-8 teaspoonsful onto hot fruit.
3. Bake for 25-30 minutes, or until topping is golden brown. Serve with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream. NOTE: You may substitute any fruit for the peaches, just being careful that the amounts are approximately the same.

***(untried recipe; source: [www.recipelands.com](http://www.recipelands.com))***

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**Don't miss Dr. David Byrne speak on  
'Peach Breeding and New Peach Rootstocks for  
Texas'  
July 23, 2002  
7:00 pm  
Bear Creek Extension Office**