Peaches do best in a climate characterized by fairly mild winters and long, hot summers. When grown in a rainy climate like that of the Willamette Valley, they are often seriously affected by diseases, principally peach leaf curl, cornewy blight, and brown rot. Peach trees also require protection from insect pests such as the peach and prune root borer, and the peach twig borer. Unless the tree is protected by thorough applications of proper pesticides, it will be damaged severely or killed by these diseases or insects.

Peach trees bloom early in spring when the weather is either cool or rainy, or clear and frosty. Orchards located 100 feet or more above the valley floor have less fog, frost, and cool temperatures. Some good peach varieties will bear much more consistently on such sites than on the river bottom or first bench. Unfortunately, irrigation water often is not available at those higher elevations. All of these hazards combined make peach growing a risky business in the Willamette Valley. An economic study of peach growing in the Willamette Valley completed in 1969, showed that production costs often exceeded prices received by growers. Most Willamette Valley peaches are sold on the farm directly to the consumer, usually for home canning or freezing, or at a nearby roadside market. A few are sold in baskets to retail stores. Peaches are not packed and shipped as grown for processing here because of the relatively high production cost and inconsistent production. Few peach trees survive long in home gardens because they do not receive the intensive care required.

Peach trees usually are grown on hardy seedling roots and spaced about 20 feet apart on the square, which gives 108 trees per acre. Arrangements with trees spaced 14 by 20 feet with 15 trees per acre also are feasible, provided the trees are pruned hard enough to prevent overcrowding. Although peaches can be grown on the deeper soils with irrigation, a maximum fruit size and production is necessary to irrigate. To maintain production, disease-free foliage and prevent tree mortality, prune every tree the infancy each year. Several peach growers in the Willamette Valley protect their orchards from spring frost by using either overtree sprinklers or orchard heaters. Peach crops in unprotected orchards frequently are lost to spring frost. Peaches require a highly intensive care. Furthermore, intensive care is needed even in years of crop failure.

**Varieties**

Of the hundreds of peach varieties tried in the Willamette Valley, only a few are grown commercially. For the most part, these varieties tend to bear more regularly than others. Many inferior qualities of a peach can be overlooked if it will bear frequently in the Willamette Valley. The following varieties are listed in order of ripening.

**Rochester** is an old variety still popular with a few growers because it blooms late and bears more regularly than other varieties. Most customers like its flavor. It ripens around the first of August (about a month before Early Elberta) and has a relatively long keeping season. It is semi-cling, bruises easily, and has astringy flesh when canned. The fruits are roundish, with an outline, yellow with mottled red overcolor, and red around the pit. They are not attractive, being coarsely coated with fuzz. The variety's fresh flavor is juicy, sweet, and appealing. Some people can not enjoy the Rochester variety because they find it astringent. They do not mind the texture of the flesh. The trees grow vigorously and tend to be more upright than Early Elberta. Strong scaffold limbs, able to support large crops, are characteristic. The Rochester variety is very susceptible to bacterial canker.

**Sunhaven** is a new variety that ripens about the same time as Rochester. It is not a reliable bearer here. The flesh is semi-cling, of good flavor, a little soft, and poor for canning. Sunhaven has a pronounced tendency to develop split pits, particularly if the crop is light. It has been grown in few locations and for a short time in the Willamette Valley.

**Early Redhaven** originated as a "sport" (mutation) of the popular variety, Redhaven. It ripens in the last week of July, 12 to 14 days before Redhaven and about 45 days before Early Elberta. It is reportedly even less reliable in bearing than regular Redhaven. It has a tendency to have split pits and has a coarser flesh than Redhaven. The flesh is yellow and semi-cling. Shape is less pointed than Redhaven and the skin is red. The tree resembles Redhaven. Very few Early Redhaven trees have been grown in the Willamette Valley.

**Redhaven** is one of the most extensively planted freestone-type peaches in the world. It is a relatively unreliable bearer at low elevations in the Willamette Valley, but it has been a reliable bearer on some hillside sites. In favorable years, it tends to set very heavy crops which require extensive thinning. Redhaven ripens about July 27 to August 10 (a month before Early Elberta). The fruit is yellow fleshed, fine textured, medium to large, and beautifully colored. It has outstand-
ingly good flavor when fresh, frozen, or canned. Due to the difficulty in removing pits, it is more popular for freezing or eating fresh than for canning. The fruit tears easily on picking. Redhaven trees need heavy pruning to obtain the best development of fruit color.

**Slappy** is grown to a very limited extent in the Willamette Valley and is a relatively unreliable bearer. It is an old variety which at one time was a favorite for home canning. The tree is highly susceptible to many diseases and often short-lived. The fruit is round-conic to flat in shape, with a deep prominent suture. Sometimes the suture is rough and warty in appearance. The outer fruit color is a pale yellow. The flesh is yellow and fully freestone. Due to its thin, tender skin, the fruit is damaged easily in handling. Its flavor is bland, mediocre. It ripens in mid-August, just ahead of Veteran and two to three weeks ahead of Early Elberta.

**July Elberta** is also known as Burbank Elberta, erroneously as Early Elberta, and by several other synonyms. It is a fairly reliable bearer in the Willamette Valley. The fruit matures about August 9 to 19 (about 2 to 3 weeks before Early Elberta). July Elberta is good for fresh consumption, freezing, or canning. In some seasons, it develops a dark, dull skin color, stringy flesh, and thick fuzz. The flesh is yellow, slightly red at the pit, firm, and freestone. It withstands handling comparatively well.

**Red Globe** has been grown to a very limited extent here. It ripens about two weeks before Early Elberta. Red Globe is a fairly reliable bearer, but its fresh eating quality is poor, since it is not very sweet. It has good color and firm flesh. The pit is removed easily.

**Veteran** is becoming the most extensively planted peach in the Willamette Valley because of its tendency to bear regularly. It ripens about August 17 to 27, 7 to 10 days before Early Elberta. Veteran is rather soft and bruises easily. Its fresh eating quality is only fair. It peels easily without scalding, which, with its free pit and rich flavor when canned, has made it a very popular variety for home canning. The tree is said to be less susceptible to diseases than Early Elberta. The fruit is round and bright yellow with a slight blush.

**Early Elberta** is also known as Improved Elberta, Gleason Elberta, Lemon Elberta, and Stark Early Elberta. It was introduced in 1907 from unknown parentage. The fruit flesh is yellow, freestone, of very high quality. It matures about 6 to 10 days before the old or standard Elberta, which it resembles. It is good fresh or for canning or freezing. Its tangy flavor is much better than that of Elberta. It has a rounder shape, less fuzz, and is a brighter golden color than Elberta. It has little red color. The flesh is firm and resistant to bruising. The blossoms are very large and showy in contrast to the medium-sized ones of Elberta. Early Elberta should not be confused with either the June or July Elberta, which are quite different varieties. It is also different from the standard Elberta, which is seldom grown in Oregon because it matures so early.

Early Elberta ripens about September 1 to 5. It does not set reliably in most Willamette Valley conditions. Sometimes it is caught in early rains which bring on brown rot. Substantial losses may occur in windstorms.

**J. H. Hale** has been grown occasionally in the Willamette Valley, but it is so late-maturing that it sometimes fails to ripen. Unlike the other varieties described, it requires a pollinizer. It is a very unreliable bearer here.

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