

## **Guidance note**

### **How to harvest good peaches**

This guide is for everyone who wants to pick large, juicy fruit from their trees and find no pests. Trees need food and water in order to give a good harvest. A neglected tree will give small fruit and also be more vulnerable to pests and diseases.

#### **Pruning:**

- Prune the tree once all the fruit has been harvested or fallen but before it starts flowering again, this is around June and July.
- Remove all dead wood, and diseased or tangled branches. Pruning cuts should be clean and angled so that moisture runs off. Ragged breaks are points for infection of diseases and pests.
- The ideal shape to aim for is a bowl, open in the centre so sunlight can warm and ripen the fruit.
- Avoid removing more than 1 quarter of the tree in any one year as it will take a long time to recover. Rehabilitate old trees over a number of years.

#### **Feeding and watering:**

- Feed the tree once a year when it blossoms using an all-purpose fertiliser, using about 1lb for a young tree and 2lb for an old tree, sprinkled all around on the ground for about the extent of the canopy. Leave a space of 6 to 12 inches from the trunk.
- Once the fruit starts forming, add a mulch of well-rotted compost around the base of the tree.
- Water demand is greatest when the fruit is forming, so if there is no rain at this period give the tree about 10 gallons per square yard every 2 weeks or so.
- If the tree is bearing many fruit, thin them out a little by pinching them off when small. That way you will get fewer but bigger, juicier fruit rather than many smaller ones.

#### **Pest control:**

- There are two main pests on the island, the Mediterranean Fruit fly, or Medfly, and the False Codling Moth. The Medfly lays many eggs in each fruit which hatch to white sluggish maggots which live in the rot caused by the female fly's sting. The False Codling Moth lays a single egg in each fruit and the active, pink maggot burrows right into the stone.

- Medflies are attracted to the smell of fir trees, cedar, and wild mango trees so clear these away from the vicinity of fruit trees.
- Pick up fallen fruit as this is a breeding ground for Medfly and False Codling Moth, as well as attracting wasps and bees. Put the fruit into a drum with water to drown any maggots and use the resulting “soup” as liquid feed for the trees.
- Female Medflies can be killed before they mate and start laying eggs by placing protein baits laced with poison in and around the fruit trees. Various products are available, such as Eco Fruitfly Bait or M3 bait stations.
- Poison baits have the big advantage that they can be used from blossom drop right through to the final fruits on the tree, don’t harm bees or other beneficial insects, or involve putting insecticides on the fruits themselves.
- Note that poison baits target Medfly and have no effect on False Codling Moth.
- Pesticide treatments are applied to the fruits themselves. Products can be Leybacid (active ingredient fenthion) or Ripcord (active ingredient cypermethrin).
  - Leybacid is better at killing fly and moth maggots in the fruit.
  - Ripcord is better at killing female flies and moths before they lay eggs and young False Codling Moth maggots before they burrow into the fruit.
- To work out when to start spraying you need to count back from when you expect to make your first harvest. You are the best judge of when this is as you know your trees best. Count back to work out when the first spray should be applied:
  - For Leybacid, the course is 3 sprays. The safety period between harvest and the last spray is 10 days, and the period between each spray is 21 days.
  - For Ripcord, the course is 4 sprays. The safety period between harvest and the last spray is 14 days, and the period between each spray is also 14 days.
  - Never harvest fruit before the safety period is up, it may still contain pesticide residues which are harmful to your health.
- Poison baits and pesticide sprays are compatible: you can use the baits to protect the crop early and late in the season, and a spray to protect the fruit at their most vulnerable, ripening stage.

For further information on products and how to apply them, please contact ANRD on 24724.