





# GROW

*your own  
peaches*

BY CAROL NUCKOLS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JARED LINDSAY

You're standing over the sink, sweet nectar dripping off your chin, a plump, luscious peach in your hand.

**I**t doesn't get much better than this. Except when you've just picked the fruit off your own tree.

With peaches in season and the Parker County Peach Festival happening July 11 on the courthouse square, these juicy treats are on lots of people's minds. The festival is supplied by commercial growers, who might sell as many as 50,000 pounds of peaches some years, estimates Gary Hutton, an owner of Hutton Fruit Farm near Weatherford. Don't expect such quantity this time around, though; a freeze clipped this year's crop.

Growing peaches can be a lot of trouble. Books and extension-service handouts tell you to prune, thin, spray



When you plant bare-root trees,  
prune hard. Really hard. That's right.  
Your tree is now a stick.



and fertilize. But unlike commercial growers, who require maximum yield and perfect fruit to sell, the average home grower can take a few shortcuts and still have cobbles and fresh fruit.

It'll take some effort, and not everyone agrees that it's worth it. "If you're not commercial, don't do it," says Ben Walker, who grows peaches commercially on two acres of his 10-acre B&G's Garden LLC near Poolville. He warns of disease problems, peach-tree borers, brown rot. He waters his trees with a drip-

irrigation system, prunes severely and sprays a commercial pesticide every three weeks with a five-gallon air-blaster sprayer. "Most people don't want to study and know what to do," he says.

Commercial growers hope to get a couple of bushels of peaches off one tree, Walker says, whereas a home grower might have to settle for half that amount. A bushel weighs about 50 pounds.

If you're game, here's how to go about it. Information is from





AgriLife Extension, Texas A&M System; county extension agent Jon R. Green; and David Coats, manager of the organic Weatherford Gardens.

**PLANTING:**

Choose a well-drained site. If water doesn't drain away in a day or two after a heavy rain, try a raised bed: 8 to 10 feet across, piled with topsoil 6 to 12 inches high.

Buy bare-root trees 3 to 4 feet tall and plant December through February. Or plant container-grown trees any