

## Fertilization

Prior to setting trees, apply liming materials as needed to bring soil within a range of pH 6.0 to 6.5. Use of some dolomitic lime is recommended, especially on sandy soils where magnesium level in the soil is low.

Because of soil type variations, there is a distinct difference in the fertilizer recommendations for peaches growing in loamy peach soils predominantly west of the Suwannee river, and those growing on the sandy peach soils of peninsular Florida. It is suggested that mixed fertilizers for the western (heavier soils) area include 8-8-8 or similar materials. Fertilizers for the peninsular (sandy) area should approximate a 12-4-8 formulation. All fertilizers should contain 1% or 2% zinc oxide (ZnO) equivalent when used on young trees. On older trees, zinc may be applied as part of the regular spray program by including 2 lbs (1 kg) of neutral zinc per 100 gal (400 liters) of water in 1 or 2 cover sprays each year, or it may continue to be supplied in the regular fertilizer program (also see notes under rust disease).

Quickly available nitrogen, applied sufficiently ahead of bloom to be taken up by the tree, is believed to improve set of fruit. Delayed availability of nitrogen may delay fruit maturity and reduce colors. Therefore, it is recommended that only mineral sources of nitrogen be used in spring peach fertilizers prior to harvest.

Sandy soils are sometimes deficient in minor elements other than zinc. Boron, at rates of 5 lbs (2 kg)  $B_2O_3$  per acre, and occasionally manganese, in sprays containing 0.75 metallic Mn per 100 gal (400 liters) have been needed to correct symptoms. Requirements for other minor elements for peaches in Florida have not been determined.

Apply fertilizer in the first (or planting) year in a circular area 6 to 24 in (1.5 to 6 dm) from the trunk as follows:

1/8 lb (0.05 kg) per tree in February

1/4 lb (0.1 kg) in late May

1/2 lb (0.2 kg) in July

On the loamy soils of west Florida fertilizer may be applied on a different schedule, one that provides 1/2 lb (0.2 kg) in February and 1/2 lb (0.2 kg) in June. In wet seasons when nitrogen is leached rapidly and trees show slow growth, apply 1/4 lb (0.1 kg) of sodium nitrate or calcium nitrate or equivalent amount of ammonium nitrate per tree in August.

In a second year, apply fertilizer to cover the area 1 ft (30 cm) from the trunk to 1 ft (30 cm) beyond the branch spread. Apply 1 to 1½ lbs (0.4 to 0.6 kg) per tree in January and the same quantity in late May. In the third year, start broadcast applications of mixed fertilizer in quantities sufficient to supply 30 to 40 lb/a (30 to 40 kg/h) actual nitrogen in January and again in late May or after the crop is harvested. Apply 20 to 30 lbs/a (20 to 30 kg/h) of actual nitrogen if needed in August during wet seasons.