

# A hardy peach?

Have you ever tasted a tree-ripened peach? Once you do, you won't forget it. It is one of the best tastes you will ever enjoy. You grab the fruit off the tree and take a big bite. The juices melt in your mouth—and probably will drool down your cheeks, too.

I tried to grow peaches twice in southeast Wisconsin (Zone 5a). The peach blooms were stunning and the fruits were absolutely delicious; unfortunately, the tree died three years after planting, as soon as it was old enough to produce crops.

This was a 'Reliance' peach tree, named for its *reliability*. Although it wasn't true to its name, its peaches tasted so good that I had to try it again. The same thing happened—the tree died as soon as it became productive.

'Reliance' is reported to be hardy to Zone 4. This year, there is a new release, 'Contender', again reportedly hardy to Zone 4.

Most North Dakotans live in Zone 4. This begs the question: is it possible for us to grow peaches here? I say yes, but with careful planning—and low expectations.




Plant the tree in an area sheltered from wind. Get a dwarf tree and keep it short. Stake it to protect it from the wind.

Before winter, consider wrapping the branches together with a strong cord and then shielding the branches with a blanket of burlap. This is a common practice used to keep fig trees alive in the Midwest and we can use it for peaches here.

Another option is to grow it in a large pot. Bring the tree into an unheated garage during winter.

Either way this is a lot of work, but after you bite into your first juicy peach you will *love* it!

And if the tree dies the following year, don't cry. As the great poet Tennyson once wrote, "Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." 

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Published February 2011  
Revised October 2011

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