Fruits for the Coastal Counties of Georgia
By David Linvill, County Extension Agent, Chatham county
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Everyone loves fresh fruit. Unfortunately, most of the fruit you buy is picked green and hard so that it can withstand shipping and sitting in refrigeration until sold. The fruit continues to ripen and respirate by using up its own sugars. This is why many fruit just don't have the home grown great taste. There is nothing better than a tree ripened fruit and having the juice squirt out as you take that first bite. The reason the fruit has that great taste is because the sugars and ripening are being produced by photosynthesis in the leaves. In general, most of the flavorful solids and sugars that give the fruit their particular taste are not produced until the last couple weeks of fruit ripeness. How can a fruit get these sugars and solids if they are picked weeks ahead of time? Farmers grow fruits that have been developed for uniform ripening, uniform size, uniform color, and disease resistance. Unfortunately, this replaces what I want in a fruit and that is good taste. That is why some of the old varieties (sometimes called heirlooms) taste the best. They may not look as pretty but my tongue doesn't care what it looks like.

The coastal counties have great weather but we also have some disadvantages. We get very hot, have lots of disease and insect problems, and don't get enough cold hours to set many fruits. The purpose of this paper is to guide the homeowner in selecting the proper fruit for their garden and also guide them on selections that have a good chance of success and also have good taste. The paper is NOT how to grow fruit. These publications can be gotten off our website at http://www.ugaextension.com/chatham and by contacting your local county agent.

Secondly, there are many more varieties of fruit that will work for you also. There is no way I can list all varieties. Take the time to research out a variety you are interested in before you buy it. Many of these varieties may be hard to find. I do not have lists of nurseries that carry each variety. However, finding different varieties should not be a huge problem with the use of the internet and all the various search engines. If you do not like to use pesticides, then consider planting varieties with diseases and insect resistance breed into them but remember you will probably sacrificing taste.

Third, all fruit needs full sun and be located near a water source. DO A SOIL TEST at least a month or more before you plant if possible. Contact your local County Agent for instructions.

APRICOTS
Too hot and too many insect & disease problems
No recommendation

APPLES
Apples are like peaches (see Peaches) in that they need to be sprayed from early spring throughout the summer for fungus and insects. Not many varieties will grow here due to chill hour requirements. The best tasting apple varieties are grown in the Northeastern states from New York up to Michigan. I suggest you plant other fruits in your yard and buy your apples. Most apple varieties are self sterile and need another variety of apple for pollination to take place. I have also noticed that there is a severe shortage of honeybees in the Savannah area so cross pollination could be a real problem.
Anna
Dorsett Golden
More information - http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C740/C740.htm

AVOCADOES
Must be grown in frost free areas – will not grow here
No recommendation
More information - http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/homefruit/avocado/avocado2.html

BANANAS
Bananas are generally insect and disease free and do not need to be sprayed. A majority of our winters are too cold for the tropical bananas which take 14 months to produce a bunch. Bananas are one of the few fruits where heavy fertilization and cold protection can hasten fruit maturity.
Dwarf nawa (sometimes spelled nawah)
Kandrian
More information - http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B992/B992.htm

BLACKBERRIES
Blackberries are easy to grow but spread vigorously. I have no problem keeping them in their allotted space by mowing. Blackberries are semi-erect which means they need to be pruned to about waist height or they will flop over. A couple of fungicide and insecticide spray are helpful since the life span of a blackberry patch is only 7 years due to virus. Blackberries are easy to grow and the fruit are large and prolific. Some varieties need to grow on trellises.
Kiowa – very thorny but has the best taste in my opinion
Natchez – no thorns
http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C766.htm

BLUEBERRIES

The beautiful rabbiteye blueberry is native to Georgia and is generally the best type of blueberries for home gardeners. Southern highbush blueberries require high organic matter soil (at least 3 percent) and are very prone to attack by deer and birds because they ripen early in the season. For this reason, they are usually poor choices from home gardeners. Rabbiteye blueberry plants seldom require spraying for insects or diseases. Blueberries grow in an acid soil so a soil test is highly recommended. The most important things to remember about starting rabbiteye blueberries are to plant more than one variety for cross-pollination. Cross-pollination is necessary for fruit set. Make sure the 2 or more varieties you select bloom about the same time also.

Early - Vernon, Brightwell

Midseason - Powderblue

http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C946/C946.htm

CHERRIES

Although fruit tree catalogs say that Bing (and other similar types) Cherries grow in zone 8, do not believe it. It may hold true up in the mountains of North Georgia but not in the Coastal counties. **Rigid pest control is necessary for high-quality fruit**. I planted a Bing Cherry Tree at my house and it is struggling even though I use a lot of pesticides to try to control fungus and borers. My tree has a big canker already started at ground level. Barbados cherries will not survive our cold.

No recommendation

FIGS

Order fig plants only from reputable nurseries in the Southeast. Never purchase or attempt to grow the kinds of figs grown in California. They require pollination by a tiny wasp that cannot survive under Georgia's climatic conditions. The only types recommended in Georgia are the common ones that produce only female flowers and set fruit without cross-pollination. Root-knot nematodes are the leading killer of fig trees in South Georgia.

Alma

Celeste

More information - http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C945/C945.html

GRAPEFRUIT

Can get scale: a dormant oil spray in the spring is beneficial. Grapefruit do not have a lot of insect or disease problems.

Marsh - white

Rio Red - red

More information - http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B992/B992.htm

KIWI
Kiwifruit require careful attention to water management. Irrigation is a must in growing kiwifruit to keep the vines from dying the first year. They are the most drought sensitive fruit grown in Georgia, but they are also one of the most sensitive to overwatering. Kiwifruit grow best on a soil such as a sandy loam or sandy clay loam with good internal drainage. Raised beds are suggested in areas with marginal soil drainage at any time of the year. Kiwifruit need a strong trellis and require a significant amount of pruning. Male and female vines must be planted to produce fruit. Usually one male is planted for every eight female vines. Kiwi is also sensitive to nematodes.
Hayward (don't forget a male pollinator)
More information - http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B992/B992.htm#kiwi

KUMQUATS
Kumquats are the most cold-hardy of the commonly grown acid citrus fruits. They require little if any pesticides. The kumquat is one of the most widely used citrus plants around the home; may be eaten fresh, peel and all, or used in making jellies, marmalade and candies. Hybrids are also available, such as orange-kumquats as an example
Nagami
Marumi
Meiwa

LEMONS
Can get scale insects; a dormant oil spray in the spring is beneficial. Lemons do not have a lot of insect or disease problems.
Meyer – is the standard
Harvey – may have a little more cold tolerance

LIMES
Although limes will grow here – most of the time it gets too cold for them so therefore I am not recommending limes. Lime hybrids are a possibility and have same qualities as tangerines.
Eustis – is similar to a lime but is actually a limequat
http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B804/B804.htm

LOQUAT
I have a loquat tree along my fence line. It is in partial to deep shade and provides me with lots of fruit even though I don't fertilize or water it. Loquats have few pest problems. Occasional fire blight can usually be controlled by the prompt removal and burning of diseased parts.
Advance
Bartow
Fletcher Red
Hardee
More information - http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B992/B992.htm

MELONS

Semi-rigid pest control is necessary for high-quality fruit.

Watermelon - AU-Producer (Crimson Sweet type), Carolina Cross (Jubilee type, used for giant watermelon production), Allsweet (oblong dark green striped melon with dark red flesh, excellent quality), and Minilee & Mickylee (icebox types, striped and grey (light green)).
Sugar Baby (not recommended – disease prone)
Cantaloupe - Athena
Specialty melons - charentais, crenshaw, casaba, Christmas melon, honeydew,(these generally don't have the best disease resistance, but the colors and shapes are quite different)
More information - http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/newsletters/hortupdate/apr05/Melons.html

MUSCADINES

Muscadine's are ideal for backyard gardens because you can successfully grow them with a minimum spray program. The best wine I ever had was made from Muscadines but they are also eaten fresh and used for preserves. A strong trellis is needed. Like blueberries, muscadines are disease and insect resistant.

Cowart
Dulcet
Scuppernong
More information - http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C949/C949.html

ORANGES/TANGARINES

We get a little too cold for most oranges. It is very possible to lose your orange fruit and possibly your tree if temperatures get low enough. Scale can be a problem. Some citrus need to be cross pollinated from another variety of citrus for pollination to take place.
Tangerines – Dancy, Ponkan (best choice for cold weather)
Tangerine hybrids – Orlando (tangelo)
Satsumas – Owari, Silverhill (best orange choice)
Navel – Washington, Dream (questionable due to cold temperatures)
Sweet Orange - Ambersweet (questionable due to cold temperatures)
More information - http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B804/B804.htm

PEACHES

Dormant trees must receive a given number of hours at temperatures below 60°F in order to break dormancy properly, flower, set and develop fruit. The current method of assessing chill unit accumulation is to count the number of hours of temperatures below 45°F that are received between October 1 and February 15. Savannah had 820 hours in 2008-2009 year, 670 hours in the 2007-2008 year and only 694 hours in 2006-2007 year. **Rigid pest control is necessary for high-quality fruit**. A spray program should begin with dormant sprays and be carried through the growing season. Trees are susceptible to tree bores and need to be protected most of the year with pesticides. I believe yellow versus white flesh peaches and clingstone versus freestone peaches are just a matter of personal choice.
Early May Gulfcrest, Sunsplash, Floridacrest,
Mid May Flordaking, Gulfking
Late May Gulfprince, Sunfire,

Early June White Robin

PEARS
Certain varieties are self-fruitful; that is, they can pollinate themselves. If you want only one pear tree, select a self-pollinating variety. Other pear varieties require cross-pollination. If you plant varieties that require cross-pollination, be sure to plant varieties that bloom at the same time. A gardener who produces the best quality fruit controls diseases and insects. **Semi-rigid pest control is necessary for high-quality fruit**. Fire blight is a disease that you should learn to recognize if you plan to grow pears. Only fireblight resistant varieties should be considered.
Baldwin, Orient (general purpose)
Kieffer (preserves)
Spalding (fresh eating)
Shinko (Asian – fresh eating)
More information - http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C742/c742.htm

PERSIMONS
Semi-rigid pest control is necessary for high-quality fruit. Native persimmons are usually dioecious; that is, trees produce either male or female flowers. Only rarely are native persimmons self-pollinating. Thus, both female and male trees are usually necessary to produce a full crop. In oriental persimmons, female, male and/or perfect flowers can be produced on the same tree. In addition, many Oriental persimmons can produce fruit from unfertilized flowers (parthenocarpic fruit), though such fruit have no seed. The oriental persimmon varieties Ichikikei Jiro, Tamopan, Tanenashi and Hachiya produce quality fruit without pollination. Although fruit can be produced without pollination, heavier and more consistent crops usually result from pollination. Parthenocarpic fruit are much more prone to drop during the growing season. Oriental persimmons can be pollinated by Fuyu or Gailey oriental varieties. Native persimmons will not cross-pollinate with Oriental persimmons.
Native – Even Golden, John Rick, Woolbright
Oriental – Eureka, Hana Fuyu, Ichikikei Jiro
More information - http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C784/C784.htm

PINEAPPLES
Should be grown in containers and taken indoors (or at least protected) from cold weather. Pineapples are biennial (take 2 years to grow).
More information - http://www.btny.purdue.edu/Outreach/resources/Growing_a_Pineapple_at_Home.pdf

PLUMS
Plum trees are susceptible to scale, various fungi, and other insects. Plums are very similar to peaches in regards to management. **Semi-rigid pest control is necessary for high-quality fruit**. Many plums (unlike peaches) are self sterile. Some plum varieties need to be cross pollinated from another variety of plum for pollination to take place.
More information - http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C881/C881.htm
Methley
Rubysweet

RASPBERRIES
I have been trying to grow raspberries at home for over 5 years with little and at best poor success. It is basically too hot for the plants even when protected. Diseases and insects are also a problem so pesticides need to be used. I feel some day that there will be a heat tolerant raspberry for the South but for now – don't waste your time.
No recommendation
http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C766.htm

RHUBARB
To hot – don't even try
No recommendation

STRAWBERRIES
Because of diseases, two very different production systems are used in Georgia. In the *matted row system*, plants are set out one spring and fruit the next. This system works best in north Georgia, and production may continue for several years. In the *annual hill system*, plants are set out in the fall and fruit the next spring. The planting is usually destroyed after the crop is harvested. This system works best in middle and South Georgia. Root-knot is the most common nematode attacking strawberries in Georgia. **Semi-rigid pest control is necessary for high-quality fruit**.
More information –
Matted row – Cardinal, Earliglow
Annual hill system – Camarosa, Chandler, Sweet Charlie
More information - http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C883/C883.htm

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