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Editor Note: photo attached

PEACH GROWERS OPTIMISTIC AFTER EXCELLENT DORMANT SEASON



Figure 1 March view of dormant peach trees with wind machine at Nichols Orchard in southern New Jersey

After an excellent winter and early spring with mild/ cold temperatures and abundant rainfall and snow, New Jersey Peach Growers anticipate an excellent crop of peach flowers, with full bloom in early April. This bloom date would be historically earlier than normal, according to Jerry Frecon, Professor Emeritus at Rutgers Jersey in Southern New Jersey. Mr. Frecon, now a consultant for the NJ Peach Promotion Council says "With the unusual winters and overall climate change we've had in New Jersey, the term 'normal' means full bloom from April

15 to 20. This can be problematic for our industry as statistically we are further removed from

the possibility of frost and low temperature injury to the developing peach flowers the later bloom occurs."

"We always have cold enough winters, so we don't have to worry about the lack of chill hours in New Jersey," according to Santo John Maccherone, owner of Circle M Fruit Farms in Salem, and Vice Chair of the New Jersey Peach Promotion Council(NJPPC). "My crop of flowers is heavy on all peach and nectarine varieties," stated Mr. Maccherone, who farms with his son John, in Southwestern New Jersey. "In spite of the recent crazy weather and the pandemic in 2020 we only picked half of a crop. We expect better in 2021. We grow a full line of white and yellow flesh peaches and nectarines, plus flat peaches and oriental plums. It's unusual, but everything has a full crop of flowers so far," said Mr. Maccherone.

"We are in good shape with all our trees pruned, new trees planted and wind machines ready to go if we have a freeze or frost," stated Joe Nichols, owner of Nichols Orchards and grower of peaches in Franklin Township, Gloucester County, NJ. "We also grow a variety of apples, which gives us a hedge against financial loss in case there is some flower injury from lower temperatures or other adverse weather which may reduce our peach crop.

Maccherone and Nichols expect to be marketing peaches from early July into September. Both sell wholesale to specialty markets and retailers.

Recent statistics published by the National Peach Council estimate NJ growers are producing about 5200 acres of peaches and nectarines and should harvest between 40 and 45 million pounds of fruit in 2021. “We are always optimistic at this time of year,” said Mr. Maccherone, “but we still have a long way until we pick and market the fruit, and lots can happen which would reduce the crop.”

The NJPPC is a voluntary organization of growers, packers, shippers, marketers and allied industries dedicated to the orderly marketing and promotion of New Jersey Peaches.



Figure 2 Peach Trees in Full Bloom in early April

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