

'UFO,' a Saucer or Donut Peach

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'UFO' saucer peach [*Prunus persica* (L.) Batsch] is released for trials by the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station. Trees of 'UFO' produce an attractive, sweet tasting, yellow and non-melting flesh fruit intended for fresh use that can be harvested "tree ripe," with full flavor and aroma, while retaining firmness for longer shelf life than fruit from melting flesh cultivars. 'UFO' is the earliest non-melting flesh, saucer (peen-tao, peento, flat, or donut shape) peach variety to ripen in the USA when grown in a subtropical climate to take advantage of its low-chill requirement and resulting early bloom. It originated from a 1995 open pollination of Fla. 95-10pc (complex parentage), was observed fruiting in 1997, and was selected in 1998 and tested as Fla. 98-7pc.

Standards and methods used in this program to evaluate genotypes have been described (3). Trees of 'UFO' are estimated to require 250 chill units based on full bloom occurring with the standard of 'Sunred' nectarine (2), which blooms in early February at Gainesville. 'UFO' has fruited well where the coldest month averages 16 to 17C (1) and in colder locations in the absence of spring frost. Thus, we expect 'UFO' to be grown successfully where 'Sunraycer' nectarine and 'Flordaglo' peach have been successful. Fruit ripen in mid- to late May at Gainesville, about 95 days from full bloom and about 5 to 7 days after 'Sunraycer' nectarine and 'Flordaglo' peach. Trees are semi-upright, vigorous, and require summer pruning to permit light penetration for formation of strong fruiting wood in the lower half of the tree. Trees at Gainesville set a high number of flower buds, have few blind nodes (5), and exhibit little bud failure prior to bloom (6). Fruit set is moderately heavy with some fruit drop in the 1 to 2

week period following shuck split. This drop has been severe in previous saucer peach genotypes as it once was for nectarines (4) in early stages of the breeding program at Gainesville. Trees of 'UFO' set an adequate crop at Gainesville and normally require fruit thinning to attain 2½ inch diameter.

'UFO' fruit have been observed at Gainesville for 4 successive years ('97-'00) on the original seedling, top worked trees, or on trees budded onto 'Flordaguard' seedling. Fruit average 60 to 80 grams or about 2½ inches diameter and 1 inch from top to bottom. Fruit do not have a tendency to split at the distal end nor drop severely during growth as is common in many saucer genotypes. Tree ripe fruit are 50 to 70 percent red (with dark red stripes) over a bright, deep yellow ground color. Fruit shape is flat oval with a small bulge and cleft at the suture. The flesh may contain a few small red flecks, but no red at the pit. Flesh is clingy to the pit, but approaches semi-free when fully ripe. Flesh is non-melting with good sweetness and low acidity, and does not brown readily on bruised or cut surfaces. Pits are medium small, donut shape with no pointed tip, and have little tendency to split even when crop loads are low.

Leaves have 4 to 6 large reniform glands and are indistinguishable from many cultivars that have regular fruit shape. Flowers are non-showy and pink. Anthers are yellow with little anthocyanin and pollen is bright yellow and abundant. Leaves and fruit have shown no bacterial spot [*Xanthomonas campestris* pv. *pruni* (Sm.) Dye] in test plantings at Gainesville where known susceptible genotypes show typical symptoms.

A plant patent has been filed for 'UFO' and a propagation agreement is available

through Florida Foundation Seed Producers, Inc., P.O. Box 309, Greenwood, FL 32443. Bud wood is non-indexed, but peach genotypes originating at the University of Florida breeding program has been found virus free in countries which routinely quarantine and index.

Literature Cited

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