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GLOUCESTER COUNTY'S PEACH BLOSSOMS BLOOM EARLY

CLAYTON NJ (April 7, 2010) --Washington, D.C. has its cherry blossoms and Gloucester County has its peach blossoms. As temperatures rise, pretty pink and light red pink blossoms are opening in all their splendor. Gloucester County is the number one peach-producing county in New Jersey and one of the major ones in the United States. Approximately 4600 acres of peach trees come alive each April with a variety of small to large showy and non-showy pink blossoms.

"We've had a good winter not too cold but just right to over winter a full crop of flower buds on most trees", said Jerry Frecon, Agricultural Agent with Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension of Gloucester County.

"Even though we may not be ready to have them bloom, our trees know when it is time to wake up, flower, and begin producing tiny peaches", said Mr. Frecon. About 15-20% of the flowers are needed to make a full crop of fruit, so we can use some natural thinning if a slight amount of sub freezing temperatures occur." "We are about 10 days to two weeks ahead of our normal bloom schedule so statistically there is a higher probability of low temperature injury this early," said Frecon.



Gloucester County has a long history of peach production, with Richwood, Harrison Township being the center of the industry. Unfortunately as we keep losing our peach orchards to commercial, educational, and housing developments, more of the peach industry has moved to Elk and South Harrison Township as well as Salem and Cumberland Counties. Our US census has the industry lists at about 6,600 acres in New Jersey with a production of 68,000,000 pounds produced annually. Of this about 65% of the acreage is in Gloucester County

Each year Mr. Frecon designs a self-guided tour through Gloucester County to maximize tourist exposure to the beautiful trees. This year it has been shortened and focused in Harrison & Elk Township, but

plenty of blossoms exist in South Harrison and Mantua. "It may not be many more years until many of these orchards are gone," says Frecon.

The self-guided tour starts at Zee Orchards on Rt. 322 east of Richwood, and ends at Heritage Station on Rt. 322 west of Richwood. Each year a few more trees are removed and not replanted along the route.

Details are also on the Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension of Gloucester County web site at <http://gloucester.njaes.rutgers.edu>.

2010 PEACH BLOSSOM TOUR DIRECTIONS

Starting from Glassboro, get onto Rt. 322 W.

Start your tour at Zee Orchards (peaches on south side of Rt. 322) before crossing over Rt. 55.

Cross over Rt. 55 to the first traffic light in Richwood and turn left onto Aura Rd., Rt. 667.

Go 0.8 mi., turn right on Williamson Rd. and follow to the end (peaches both sides).

Turn left onto Richwood Rd., Rt. 609 (Reuter's Orchards) and follow about 2 miles to Hardingville.

Turn right onto Whig Lane, Rt. 619 for 0.3 mi. and right again onto Elk Rd., Rt. 538 (peaches at Fruitwood Orchards).

Follow Rt. 538 W to blinking light in Ferrell and turn left onto Ellis Mill Rd., Rt. 641.

In less than a mile, you will come to the Bridgeton Pike, Rt. 77 (Mood's Farm and Windmill) will be on your left.

Turn right onto Rt. 77 toward Mullica Hill (sweet cherries and peaches).

Pass Sorbello Girls Farm Market on your right.

Continue on Rt. 77 passing the Gloucester County 4-H Fairgrounds on your right, the Harrison Township Municipal Building on your left, and almost into Mullica Hill.

Look for Spicer St. on your left and turn left. Spicer St. is a short throughway to Rt. 45.

Turn left onto Woodstown Rd., Rt. 45 1.2 mi. to light at Swedesboro-Franklinville Rd., Rt. 538.

Turn right on Rt. 538 about 1 mile.

Turn right on Tomlin Station Rd., Rt. 607 (peaches on both sides, Circle M Farm).

Go 1.5 mi. to light and turn right onto Woodland Ave.

Continue on Woodland Ave 1.7 mi. into Mullica Hill and make a right turn onto Main St., Rt. 45.

Very shortly, you will turn left onto Mullica Hill Rd., Rt. 322 E.

Go about 1.5 mi. and just past Lone Stag Ranch on your left, turn left onto Sherwin Rd.

Cross Cedar Rd. and Jackson Rd. straight on to Heilig Rd. (peaches and apples at Heilig Farm).

Follow to the end of Heilig Rd. and turn right onto Barnsboro Rd., Rt. 609, Crossing Rt. 322, continue on Rt. 609, now Richwood Rd., for 0.8 mi. (apples and peaches).

Turn right onto Bishop Rd. (peaches both sides).

Bishop Rd. will cross Harrisonville Rd. to continue winding back toward Mullica Hill Rd, Rt. 322.

