

Peach (*Prunus persica*) Jo Francks, M.H.

I always look forward to this time of year. Fresh locally grown produce is abundant and I think my favorite just might be fresh peaches. The season seems to go by too quickly and before you know it there are no more peaches to be found. Peaches are rich in antioxidants and other compounds that help prevent and fight various kinds of cancer, lower cholesterol, improve eyesight, reduce inflammation, improve skin health and strengthen the immune system. The peach fruit is delicious to eat but there are many parts of the tree that can be used medicinally including the bark, leaf, and flower.

Peach bark is used as a nervine and a blood purifier. An infusion or a few capsules are said to stop cases of difficult diarrhea almost immediately. It is also used to relieve morning sickness in pregnancy. It can be made into a tea or a tincture made from the fresh bark in alcohol. The bark is also an agent used for the urinary tract in cases of burning urine and inflammation. Folk legends say that if you have an upset stomach you should scrape the bark downward from a peach tree, boil it and drink it. If that upset turns to diarrhea you should scrape the bark upward and repeat the process!

Peach leaves are used as an excellent gentle laxative in cases of constipation. They have been used to expel worms. A tea of the leaves can be used to calm the nerves and to relieve coughing spasms. The bark and leaves have many of the same properties. They are used as a sedative and expectorant. All coughs can benefit from using peach bark or leaf. Gather peach leaves in the late summer when still green, dry them and store them to use as a tea through the winter.

Peach flowers are good for the skin and have been used for skin cancer. The flowers can be made into a tea and taken internally or used topically as a fomentation. The fruit can be blended and used as a mask on the skin and has been beneficial in removing dark circles. Enjoy eating peaches while they are ripe. A great way to preserve them is to dry them or freeze them. I have made canned peaches for many years using concentrated frozen apple juice as a sweetener instead of sugar. We enjoy making peach cobbler, peach ice cream (dairy free), smoothies and many other recipes using peaches.

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