

# Apricot

*Prunus armeniaca* (Rosaceae)

## Fast Facts:

Acres in Washington: 1287
Bearing age acres: 1,181
Non bearing acres: 106
Value per harvested acre: \$7,513
Number of Growers: 316 farms
Bearing age farms: 248
Non bearing farms: 98
Washington production: 75,250 tons
Value of Production in Washington: \$7,137,000
Percent of U.S. Production: 4.2%
*Statistics Provided by the Washington Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS).

*Apricots are the 39<sup>th</sup> most valuable commodity in the state*

## Description of crop:

Trees are propagated by budding or grafting onto rootstocks. Rootstocks are used for resistance to disease and insects and do not control size. Trees generally take at least five years to reach full commercial production and can remain in production about 20 years, depending on the popularity of a variety and the disease/insect pressure. Trees are pruned winter and summer. Winter pruning directs growth in specific areas of the tree. Summer pruning removes unwanted limbs and allows light to reach all parts of the tree. Pruning also ensures good fruit bud development and manages tree size. Commercial practices include irrigation, fertilization and weed control. Frost protection may be necessary in many production areas. Some apricot varieties, such as Perfection, also are thinned by hand to increase fruit size. Fruit is harvested by hand in July and August.

## Key pests:

Weeds are a primary problem, especially for young trees, because they compete with the trees for water, sunlight and nutrients. Weeds cause three additional problems. They can block sprinkler heads, making irrigation difficult, or provide alternated host sites for harmful insects. They also encourage mice to populate the orchard, often necessitating chemical control of rodents. Common annual weed problems include mustards, pigweeds, lambsquarter and grasses. Common perennial weeds include quackgrass, field bindweed and dandelion. The most common disease is powdery mildew. The primary insect pest is peach twigborer. Leafrollers are an increasing problem for growers.

**Key pesticides:**

Unlike pears and apples, stone fruits are intolerant of many residual herbicides. Thus, growers must apply herbicides such as Roundup and Gramoxone more frequently and diligently for effective weed control. Devironol and Surflan are also used for weed control. Powdery mildew is controlled with Abound, Orbit or for organic growers it is controlled with Kaligreen, potassium carbonate. Peach twigborer is controlled with Thionex, Delagate, or Success and if a continued problem with Dimlin. For organic growers, use of mating disruption is effective to about 50%. This is too expensive for conventional growers but it is an alternative for organics. Leafrollers are controlled using Success, Delagate, and Bacillus thuringensis, (Dipel or Javelin).

**Critical pest control issues:**

Weed control is important in orchards because bees can be attracted to weeds in bloom. Growers may apply insecticides harmful to bees when the tree crop is not in bloom; however, the bees may be harmed if they are in the orchard pollinating blooming weeds. Applications that are potentially harmful to bees are generally curtailed but when unavoidable often are put on after night fall, with enough time to allow drying before morning and/or dewfall, while bees are inactive. Due to the intensive hand labor needed for production, farm worker safety is an important issue also. Air blast applications of endosulfan in stone fruit require a closed cab. Applicators are permitted to use open cab air blast equipment provided they are wearing chemical resistant headgear and maximum PPE clothing. The increasing cost of hand labor is putting a severe strain on apricot growers. Apricot acreage dwindled substantially due to lower than production cost returns. Acreage has increased slightly with higher returns for the fruit but the margins remain quite tight. Thinning which is done by hand is a huge cost for the grower. Research is being done at the University of Idaho on chemical thinners for apricots in the form of Turgitol, an industrial wax remover. An effective chemical thinner would be a big boost to the industry.

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**Location**

**Of production:** Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Clallam, Clark, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Grant, Island, King, Kitsap, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lewis, Okanogan, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Spokane, Stevens, Thurston, Whatcom, Whitman, and Yakima counties.



# Apricot Production in Washington State

Apricot



■ Area of Apricot Production