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Have a Fruitful Fall

Time flies. Can you believe a young man like me, became a granddad last week. No matter what the thermometer says, fall is falling fast. One of our sweet joys of summer is about to end, McBee peaches. You better hurry if you want sweet peach juice dripping from your chin. "Nanny nanny boo boo" I went up to McBee last weekend and got my bushel. I grew-up with peaches in McBee and fall was always a bitter-sweet time of year. Glad that the hard work was over but after eating a half peck of peaches a day all summer, fruit sugar (fructose) withdrawal was a bummer. In those days, all types of fruits were not available all year long like today. We had to enjoy whatever was in season, locally grown, or grown on the farm. I still like locally grown fruit because it can be allowed to ripen to its fullness on the plant, picked at its optimum quality, and not trucked all over the country.

The Southern Bell of the fall fruits, muscadines are beginning to fall off the vine. Black, bronze, or many variations of red (crosses between the black and bronze) are available. Apart from popular belief the bronze ones are not all Scuppernongs. They are all muscadines with Scuppernong being a popular old bronze variety. In fact, there are more than a hundred named varieties each with their particular harvest season, size, sugar content, and etc. So, when purchasing fruit ask for a particular variety or taste the fruit to determine if they meet your standards. Many SC farmers are beginning to grow muscadines as a crop as part of the SC muscadine initiative. If you would like more information give Jody Martin a call at 843-661-4800. However, Muscadines are one of those fruits that take little perpetual care except for trellising and pruning and are fairly easy to grow in the homegarden. Clemson Extension's Home & Garden Information Center has an excellent publication on muscadine production and many other fruits at <http://hgic.clemson.edu>. If you are of the northern persuasion, you are probably wondering why muscadines and not bunch grapes. Well we have a problem with Pierce's Disease and bunch grapes will only live a few years in this part of the south. Muscadines are resistant to Pierce's Disease and in fact grow wild all over southern forests.

Also, one of my favorite fruits, pears are ready. I guess I like them because we always had a pear tree on the farm. Daddy used to whip our tails if we ate the pears before they were ready. However, daddy did not know that pears are actually one of the only fruits that increases in quality after harvest. After maturity but before they soften, pick the pears and place on your counter top where you and others can enjoy their beauty and fragrance.

To learn more about gardening watch both of our Emmy Award winning T.V. programs, Making-It-Grow (MIG) and More-Making-It-Grower (MoMIG). MIG can be seen at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday nights on regular ETV. However, at present MoMIG can only be seen on digital cable and some satellite systems on the SC Channel (channel 802 on Time Warner Cable).

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