Location

From Campus
At traffic light at intersection of Perimeter Rd and Cherry Rd, take Cherry Rd away from campus and after 0.7 mi turn right at 3-way stop onto Old Cherry Rd. Continue across Lake Hartwell and take left on J.P. Stevens Rd. Turn right onto Martin Creek Rd (SC-65). Continue 3.0 miles and bear left onto Coneross Creek Rd at Friendship United Methodist Church. Turn immediately left onto South Friendship Rd, and the farm is 2 miles on the right.

From Off-Campus
On I-85 take exit 19B (Hwy 76/28 west) continue 9.7 miles and turn left on Perimeter Rd. Continue 1.2 mi to traffic light at intersection of Perimeter Rd and Cherry Rd. Continue with from campus directions.

Tours
Tours are by appointment only. Please call or email to inquire about tours.
(864) 882-0028  hopkin4@clemson.edu

Contact Information
604 South Friendship Rd
Seneca, SC 29678
Manager: Jeffrey Hopkins
Office: (864) 882-0028
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www.clemson.edu/researchfarms

The Musser Fruit Research Center is a unit of Clemson University’s Public Service Activities (PSA). Clemson PSA programs develop and deliver impartial science-based information in five areas that align with the national land-grant university system and touch the life for every South Carolinian.

www.clemson.edu/public
Research

Interdisciplinary teams of researchers from the fields of horticulture, plant pathology, entomology, and molecular biology/genetics cooperate to provide research-based information to advance the fruit industry.

Clemson University researchers have developed the Guardian™ peach rootstock in cooperation with the USDA Agricultural Research Station in Byron, GA. Guardian™ rootstock is resistant to peach tree short-life (PTSL) disease complex, which was once a devastating problem in the Southeast, costing peach growers millions of dollars annually. The rootstock seed is produced at the Musser Fruit Research Center and is distributed and sold to licensed nurseries through the South Carolina Crop Improvement Association.

A recently established peach breeding program at Clemson University focuses on the development of varieties with improved resistance to disease and environmental stress. Traditional and molecular approaches are used to develop new and improved varieties that will help growers in the Southeast produce very high quality peaches for fresh consumption.

Research projects in the fields of molecular biology and plant physiology rely on the high genetic diversity of Musser Farm’s populations of peach seedlings. The peach has become a model in genomic studies of fruit trees and other perennial species. There are several on-going studies of various peach genes involved in fruit quality and disease resistance.

Current plant pathology research focuses on the management of diseases affecting peach fruit and peach root systems. Novel strategies are being used for managing pesticide resistance, such as the development of disease-resistant rootstocks using molecular techniques. Plant virology research centers on maintaining a virus-free source of budwood for important peach varieties. As part of the National Clean Plant Network, Clemson University helps ensure that growers plant virus-free fruit trees.

Hundreds of new varieties and advanced selections of peaches, nectarines, and plums are currently being grown and tested at Musser Farm. Researchers evaluate the suitability of each variety for commercial production in the Southeast. Fruit characteristics such as size, shape, color, flavor, firmness, and susceptibility to disease are assessed and compared with industry standard cultivars.

Facility

The main research building totals nearly 6,000 ft² and houses laboratories, cold storage rooms, and offices for farm management and technical staff. Other facilities include a greenhouse, shadehouse, pesticide storage and handling building, weather station, and an irrigation system. Two wind machines are employed for spring freeze protection in the peach orchards. Orchards maintained for horticulture, plant pathology, plant physiology, and genetics research currently total 45 acres of peaches, nectarines, and plums, 3 acres of chestnuts and pecans, and 1 acre of small fruit crops including blueberries, blackberries, muscadine grapes, and figs. Edible landscaping has been implemented around the main building for academic teaching and extension purposes.