

Oh, Those Mouth-Watering Peaches!

Summertime has made its entrance, and around here, that means peaches are high on the minds of local residents.

That's because Gilliland Orchards, producing some of the finest of that fruit you ever put in your mouth, have been legend since way back in the mid-20th century.

Established by John and Alma Jean Gilliland of Cleveland, Tennessee, Gilliland Orchards, from the outset, had as its mission to be the absolute best in growing peaches, believing it would attract customers because of its commitment to quality.



And it did. Even citizens of Georgia, the Peach State, travel across the state line to buy Tennessee peaches from the Gillilands. Each spring, news about the first frost concerns residents who fret over its potential impact on the peach crop.

Public interest in peaches here has always been so great that when *The Cleveland Daily Banner* – one of the oldest newspapers in Tennessee, established in 1854 – published its first-ever Sunday edition on July 14, 1974, it made Gilliland Orchards and the peach crop the top story. In it, University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service officials were quoted: “Bradley County’s peach crop [referring to Gilliland’s] is superior in quality to that being produced in Georgia and North Carolina [Southern states typically recognized as leading peach producers].”



Do I have your appetite for peaches sufficiently aroused? If so, consider this scenario:

You drive up to a local roadside produce market with your heart set on buying a load of fresh fruits, including peaches, and a variety of summer vegetables. You see homegrown tomatoes, squash, cucumbers and several varieties of peppers – everything you need and more.

Just as you start to select your items, the farmer who owns the stand says, “Sorry, ma’am; this produce isn’t for sale. I just like to grow it and enjoy looking at it until it rots. Then I throw it away.”

(more)

I can guarantee that is not what you would have heard from John Gilliland. And likely you haven't encountered such an absurd situation, and probably never will. Farmers and consumers know that produce is for consuming. Sure, it's beautiful to look at, but its God-ordained purpose is to bring nutrition and health to people. Fruit that isn't consumed is no better than fruit that was never grown.

Now stay with me for the spiritual application. In believers in Jesus Christ, the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, according to Galatians 5:22-23. All of those are appealing qualities.

But if Christians are not manifesting the fruit in their lives that benefit other people, something's wrong.

The fruit of the Spirit, as well as the good works we were made to walk in (Ephesians 2:10), are not for analyzing, discussing and admiring. They are for sharing with others!

Not to bear and share fruit in the Christian life is to keep others from being blessed as God intended. Bearing fruit and sharing fruit are two sides of the same spiritual coin.



And those of us in Life Care and Century Park have opportunities to share fruit every day. What a noble calling we've been given!

Therefore by their fruits you will know them (Matthew 7:20 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter