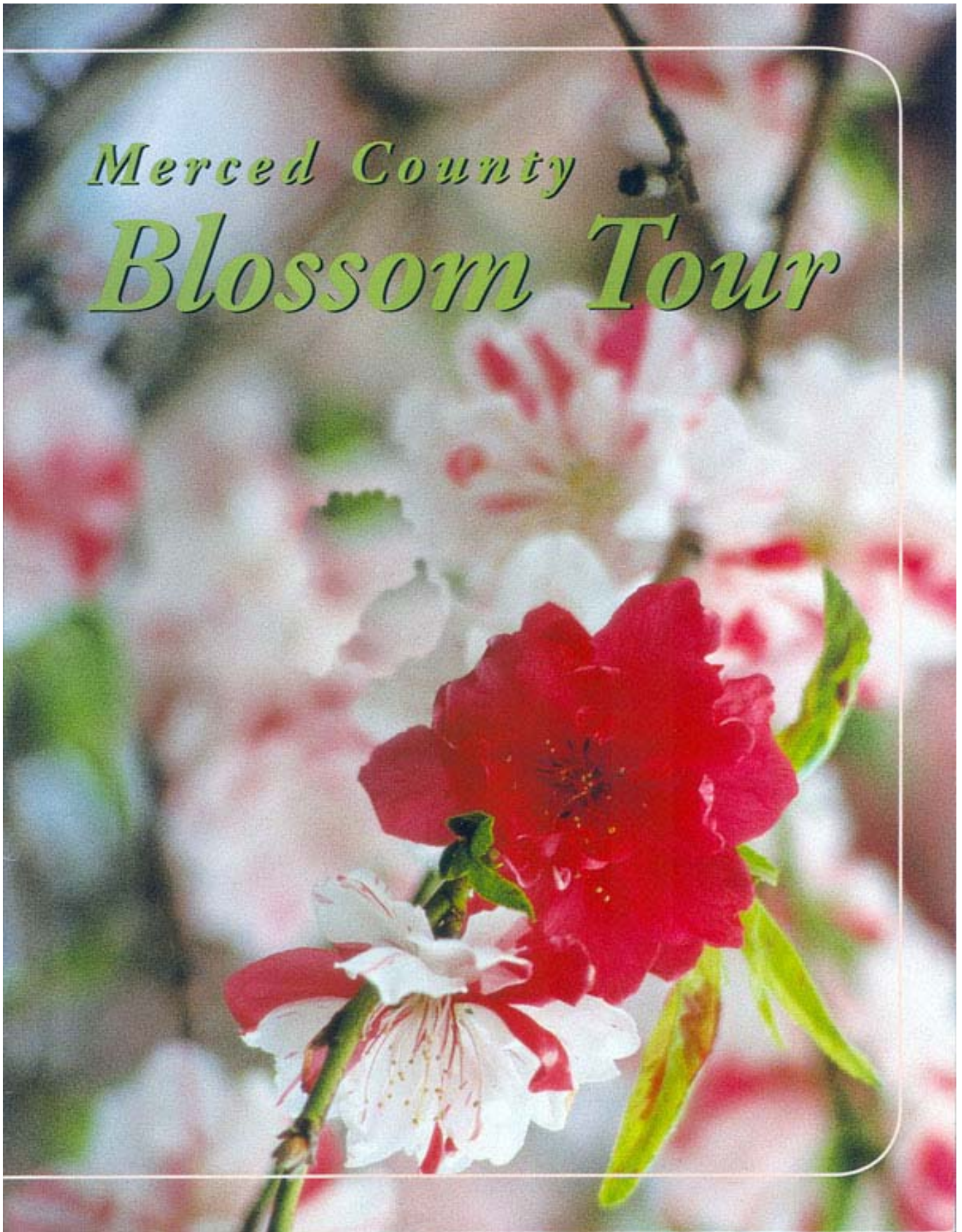


*Merced County*  
*Blossom Tour*





### ***Peach Blossom Tour***

Peach bloom peaks approximately March 10 ± one week.

Begin at the Collier Rd/Bloss Ave. overpass south of Delhi

Go west on Bloss Ave.

Turn right and go north on Griffith

Turn right and go east on Bradbury over the freeway

Turn left and go north on Vincent one block

Turn right and go east on Lombardy and cross the RR tracks

Turn right and go southeast on Santa Fe through Ballico

Turn left and go east on Bradbury

Turn right and go south on Alves

Turn right and go west on El Capitan

Turn left and go south on Santa Fe to the stop sign in Cressey

Turn left and go east on Meadow Drive till it ends

Turn left and go north on Shaffer one block

Turn right and go east on Fisher

Turn right and go south on Buhach

Turn right and go west on Mercedes one block

Turn left and go south on Shaffer one block

Turn right and go west on Eucalyptus, cross Santa Fe

Turn left and go south on Central to Fruitland where the tour ends

#### **To the freeway:**

You can continue to the Freeway and turn right to go north. Making a left turn onto the freeway can be dangerous. An alternative is to turn left on Fruitland and go east into Atwater and go south on Winton Way to the Freeway.



**M**arch is the time of year that several varieties of trees are blooming. Here are a few tips on how to tell what you are seeing:

Almond and apricot trees have white blossoms. Apricots are the first commercial orchard crop to bloom and they are followed closely by almonds. They both have a rough brown trunk and will have several large branches trained to create a large spherical shape. Commercial apricot orchards, very common on the Westside, are rare on the east side of the county.

Peaches and nectarines being the same species (a nectarine is simply any variety of peach without fuzz) bloom next and have two types of blossoms. Some have showy pink blossoms and some varieties have inconspicuous reddish-pink flowers that are so small that you need to walk up to them to see their colors. We call these non-showy types. You can tell the non-showy types are blooming because the whole orchard will have a dark reddish color. Peaches are shorter than almonds and are trained to an open vase shape with a flat top. Some cling peach orchards are pruned to a cordon system similar to the wine grapes in the area. This system, while expensive to develop, allows the tree to be pruned, thinned and harvested without ladders - A feature that both the farmer and workers like very much!

Plum trees bloom with the peach trees, but have compact white blossoms. The trees are shorter than peaches and have very few side branches coming off the upright scaffolds. The older trees will have a gnarled trunk.

Prune trees look just like plums since they are so closely related. Most of the prunes are southeast of Merced and on the Westside of the county.

You may spot a few Asian pears. These trees could be pruned in any fashion and will resemble plum and peach trees. They have larger white flowers and bloom around the same time as plums. The bark on the Asian pears is smoother than both the peach and plum trees.

Walnuts are much larger than the fruit trees and have white smooth bark down to the graft union where the Persian walnut scion wood meets the dark rough California Black Walnut rootstock. All of our fruit and nut trees along with many of the grapes are grown on rootstock, which are resistant to soil pests and diseases such as nematodes, drown and root rot, oak root fungus and others. This allows the farmer to grow imported varieties without chemicals to kill these pests. Walnuts are wind-pollinated and do not need showy flowers to attract insects. In fact, walnuts have separate male flowers (catkins), which release the pollen and female flowers (pistillate) to catch the pollen.

Almond farmers try to set as many flowers as possible so they have to hire beekeepers to place two or three hives per acre to help carry the pollen from the pollinizer variety to the main variety and vice-versa. Since most stone fruit trees set more fruit than they can size anyway and have to be thinned (an expensive operation), bees are not needed for these four crops. Apple orchards, kiwi fruit, and some prune orchards have bees brought in on occasion. Other orchard crops that you will find in Merced County are figs, pistachios, black boysenberries, cherries, olives, pecans, wine and raisin grapes, citrus and persimmons.

Row crops that you may see in the region would be sweet potatoes, cucumbers, tomatoes, bell peppers, strawberries, broccoli, reddicho and all types of melons.

Field crops in the region are cotton, grains, corn, alfalfa, sugar beets and some rice.

### *Blossom Bloom Time*

ALMONDS February 25-28 +/- 10 days

PLUMS March 1-5 +/- 10 days

PEACHES March 10 +/- 10 days

APPLES March 27 +/- 10 days

APRICOTS March 1-10 +/- 10 days

*Merced County is one of  
California's top five producers of:*

- Cantaloupes
- Sheep & Lambs
- Tomatoes
- Honey
- Almonds
- Apricots
- Figs
- Peaches
- Cotton
- Hay & Alfalfa
- Sugar Beets
- Eggs & Chickens for Meat
- Hogs & Pigs
- Turkeys
- Sweet Potatoes
- Milk & Cream
- Oats
- Cattle & Calves

Merced County is ranked sixth over all for total Ag output in the nation.

Merced County is also a major center of agricultural processing and food/wine manufacturing.

Sources:  
California Agricultural Resource Directory 2000, [www.cdfr.ca.gov](http://www.cdfr.ca.gov)  
1997 US Census of Agriculture, [www.usda.gov/nass](http://www.usda.gov/nass)

### **Thank You**

**Maxwell Norton** - Farm Advisor,  
*Deciduous Fruits & Vines*

*University of California  
Cooperative Extension  
Merced County*

Your knowledge and the time  
you have invested in this  
brochure is much appreciated.

Photos Courtesy of:

- Robert Dayton
- Maxwell Norton



### **Merced Conference & Visitors Bureau**

710 W. 16th Street  
Merced, California 95340

For more information  
regarding Merced County  
please call (800) 446-5353  
or (209) 384-2791

[mercedvli@yosemite-gateway.org](mailto:mercedvli@yosemite-gateway.org)