

# A peachy idea: orchard planted off Glover Road

BY JEFFREY  
CULLEN-DEAN  
jeffrey@newnan.com

Scott Clements has planted 250 trees to start a peach orchard on a 6-acre plot of land off Glover Road in Newnan.

On the orchard Clements uses techniques that combine older methods of farming with contemporary research. "I combine the old school with the new," said Clements.

He started the orchard earlier this year.

Clements said he read notes from county extension agents dating back to 1898 to better understand peach farming when he prepared to start the orchard. "The people back then wrote very well, but they didn't have the tools," he said.

Peach trees are typically planted 10-12 feet apart. In Clements's orchard, however, the trees are not as far apart. "It's a California model. You're able to keep the trees closer together," said Clements.

The model is called the Perpendicular-V System, which relies on pruning the trees so that the branches form a V-shape at the base. The trees are then planted perpendicular to the row. This allows the trees to be planted closer together to conserve space. The method was developed because of the high cost of land in California.

The higher-tech aspects of the orchard still contain the DIY spirit. Clements said he was unable to run water to his farm, so he dug a well and uses solar panels mounted on a metal fence to power it.

He said it's neither high-tech nor over-designed.

"We use modern methods, but an old tractor," said Clements.

The orchard contains five varieties of peaches; Elberta, Loring, Red Haven, Coronet and August Prince. Clements said having multiple varieties allows the harvesting schedule to be staggered.

"The peaches can be picked at multiple times, a week to 10 days apart," he said.

Coweta County has a history of growing peaches, said David Brown, a local agricultural historian.

Coweta county was once one of the main parts of Georgia that grew peaches. "The county had maybe 5,000 acres during the '30s to World War II," Brown said. "That was the main period of peach production."

The peaches sold well in the north. "New York was where the money was if you could get them there in good condition," said Brown.

At the time, you would have to be a pretty good gambler to get into peaches, said Brown.

The peaches were susceptible to frost, so a profit was not guaranteed every year. If the peaches survived long enough to be sold, they still had to be put on ice for shipping to the northern states, which was a risky move as mechanical refrigeration wouldn't be invented until the second half of the 20th century.

Clements' plot of land used to be a farm in the 1960s, but at the present day, the surrounding area has been cut up into neighborhoods. Clements said the land he bought was too small to be used by developers, "This property, nobody wanted it," he said. "Since the land was previously a farm, the soil was already rich. It was easy to reintroduce trees."

Friends and family help Clements take care of the orchard. Keith Taylor, a friend of Clements, comes by regularly. "I come out here and use my tractor to keep the grass down," Taylor said. "I helped work on the shed and helped put up the solar panels."

Clements said his grandparents owned an apple and cherry orchard in Maryland when he was young. "My uncle put me in a bucket and lifted me into the trees, and I



PHOTOS BY JEFFREY CULLEN DEAN

Scott Clements named his peach orchard for his granddaughter, Penelope.



These peach trees were 18 inches tall when they were planted seven months ago. Today, they're 6 1/2 feet tall.

started gorging on cherries," Clement said. "I want my grandchildren to know what that's like."

The orchard is named after one of his grandchildren, Penelope, but Clements isn't picking favorites. The tractor will be named after his other grandchild, Gus.

Clements said the first crop of peaches should be available in June 2020.