

Peach Cultivar Trials: Observations and Comments

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In the Fall 1995 issue of *Fruit Notes*, I described and commented on the first plantings of peaches and nectarines in my cultivar trial at the University of Massachusetts Horticultural Research Center in Belchertown. Since another full growing season has passed, it seems appropriate to add to the information presented previously.

Additionally, in the spring of 1996, I added three yellow-fleshed peaches, replaced three yellow-fleshed peaches from the 1993 trial, added one white peach and replaced another, and added three white-fleshed nectarines. The peach cultivar trial now includes 20 yellow-fleshed peaches, 7 white-fleshed peaches, 6 yellow-fleshed nectarines, and 3 white-fleshed nectarines.

All cultivars planted prior to 1996 fruited in 1996. Following is updated information on the cultivars that were planted in 1990, as well as initial observations of fruit from the 1993 and 1994 plantings. I also will describe the cultivars that were planted in 1996.

1990 Planting

Yellow-fleshed Peaches

Jerseydawn was very popular at the Horticultural Research Center in 1996. For an early fruit, the flavor in 1996 was excellent, size was good, and split pits occurred in only about 20% of the crop.

Redhaven. Size was not impressive this year, nor was flavor. There are several other cultivars in this harvest window that have better size and fruit quality than Redhaven.

Salem fruit were very good to excellent in 1996. The flavor was excellent, size was good, and the fruit was very attractive.

Flavorcrest fruit were very flavorful and had high quality in 1996.

New Haven. Although fruit size in 1996 was some-what smaller than ideal, fruit quality was excellent. New Haven is a much better peach than Redhaven.

Madison was an excellent peach. It had great peach flavor, was good size, and was attractive.

Harrow Beauty was one of my favorites in 1996. The fruit had good size and great peach flavor.

Jim Dandee fruit size was not as impressive in 1996 as it was in 1995, but the flavor of this peach was very good.

Harcrest fruit were flavorful, had good size, and had very impressive quality in 1996.

Fayette flavor was disappointing in 1996; however, it was a good late season cultivar.

Encore may be too late for most growers, especially those who harvest large acreages of McIntosh apples. It was a good peach for the late season.

White-fleshed Peaches

Summer Pearl fruit were not as flavorful in 1996 as in previous years. Quality was good, and size was good. Fruit do not hold up well after harvest.

Nectarines

Earliscarlet fruit sized well and had excellent flavor.

Fantasia sized well and had excellent flavor and color but ripened in mid-September, a problem for some growers.

Summer Beaut was an excellent nectarine. Size was good, fruits were flavorful, and color

was good where trees were open.

1993 Planting

Yellow-fleshed Peaches

John Boy was a very large, flavorful peach. It was attractive, but did not have the best quality. Fruit were harvested a little late, which may have influenced quality.

Sentry appeared to be a good peach, but further evaluations are required.

White-fleshed Peaches

Lady Nancy fruit were of good size and quality and very attractive.

Red Rose fruit were medium in size and had good quality.

1994 Planting

White-fleshed Peaches

White Lady trees bore a few fruit in 1996, but will reserve comment until next year.

Sugar Lady trees also bore fruit for the first time in 1996. Fruit were good size and had reason-able quality.

Nectarines

Easternglo produced a few fruit in 1996. Color was excellent, but flavor was not great.

Sunglo produced few fruit in 1996. Fruit had good size, good color, and good flavor.

1996 Planting

Descriptions below are based on catalog or on evaluations from other areas of the country.

Yellow-fleshed Peaches

PF-1 fruit ripen 20 days before Redhaven, are

partial clingstone, and have very few split pits. Trees are hardy. Color is 90% red over yellow.

PF-15A fruit ripen 13 days after Redhaven, are large, red over yellow, and freestone. Trees produce heavily and are hardy.

PF-17A fruit ripen 17 days after Redhaven, are large, firm, and 70% red. Fruit are reported to be excellent for shipping. Trees are hardy.

White-fleshed Peaches

Raritan Rose fruit ripen 4 days after Redhaven, are firm, attractive, and freestone, with good quality. Trees are vigorous, hardy, and productive.

White-fleshed Nectarines

Arctic Glo fruit ripen 10 days before Redhaven, are medium-large, very firm, highly colored, and reported to ship well. Trees are vigorous and productive.

Arctic Rose fruit ripen 7 days after Redhaven, are medium size, firm, very sweet, and highly colored.

Arctic Queen fruit ripen 29 days after Redhaven, are large, firm, sweet, and highly colored.

In 1997, I will conduct a more extensive evaluation of all the cultivars in this trial. I will evaluate fruit for size, color, taste, abnormalities (such as split pits), and texture. Tree vigor and productivity and disease resistance also will be evaluated. Also less favorable cultivars will be removed and possibly replaced with additional early cultivars.

At this time, I recommend that Massachusetts growers plant on a trial basis the following yellow-fleshed peach cultivars: Jerseydawn, Salem, Flavorcrest, New Haven, Madison, Harrow Beauty, Jim Dandee, and Harcrest. For a white-fleshed peach, Summer Pearl should be tried. Earlisscarlet, Summer Beaut, and Fantasia are nectarines worthy of trial.

