

Wilder Medal Recipients for 1969

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The Wilder Medal is one of the most coveted awards in American agriculture. It is presented by the American Pomological Society for outstanding contributions in service to horticulture. This year three men have been selected in recognition of their development of new fruit varieties through breeding.

Joseph R. Furr was awarded the Wilder Medal for outstanding contributions in the understanding of water relations of citrus, and the improvement of citrus varieties through breeding and selection. Dr. Furr has had a distinguished career of 39 years of research in the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. He is a native of Marks, Mississippi but has spent the last 24 years in charge of the U.S. Date and Citrus Station at Indio, California.



Fig. 1. Joseph R. Furr.

Dr. Furr began his research career as a graduate student working on apples in New York State. After employment by the USDA, he worked on water relations of apples in western Maryland, and then moved to southern California, where he worked on water relations and irrigation of citrus. He was then transferred to Florida, where he worked on irrigation, nutrition, and breeding problems of citrus and avocados. In 1946, he took charge of the U.S. Date and Citrus Station at Indio, California, where he has since worked on production and breeding of citrus and dates.

Among Dr. Furr's most recent accomplishments are the introduction of three new tangerine varieties, Fairchild, Fremont, and Fortune. These have completely replaced the standard tangerine, Dancy, in new plantings in California. He has also developed a new rootstock with improved tolerance to salinity and Phytophthora root rot, and several dwarfing rootstocks which may alleviate some of the labor problem in harvesting citrus. He has dozens of hybrid citrus under second and third testings which are superior to present commercial varieties.

George D. Oberle received the Wilder Medal for his nectarine, peach, apple, and grape introductions which have already had a very significant impact on the fruit industry in the eastern U.S. The basic training and research activities of Dr. Oberle have been in the field of fruit breeding. He is a recognized authority in genetics and cytology as related to fruit hybridization.

Dr. Oberle was born in Carbondale, Kansas. He received his B.S. degree

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Fig. 2. George D. Oberle.

from Kansas State College. After completing his Ph.D. work at Cornell, he was employed there until 1948, when he became Professor of Horticulture at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. His most productive work in fruit breeding has been done at VPI.

The fruit introductions of Dr. Oberle include 7 nectarines, 7 peaches, 4 apples and 1 grape. Another apple will be named and introduced in 1970. The nectarines which have been introduced represent a unique contribution because of their demonstrated resistance to brown rot infection. This resistance is so pronounced that the fruit can be protected against brown rot with the regular peach spray schedule which is recommended for Virginia orchards. Because of their resistance to brown rot, and tolerance to winter cold and blossom season frosts, the introduction of these nectarines has caused a marked increase in interest in nectarine production in Virginia and other eastern states.

The peaches introduced by Dr. Oberle are an important contribution

to horticulture because of their ability to escape blossom season frosts. This has resulted in widespread plantings in Virginia and neighboring states. The fruits of the Virginia Presidential series have firm, yellow flesh, a free-stone, and a spread in ripening which provides for harvest over nearly the entire period of the typical peach harvesting season. Two new non-melting flesh cling peaches have given outstanding performance in the orchard and in canning tests, and will undoubtedly be named and released.

The new apples have exceptional processing and storage characteristics. One is of particular significance as a possible replacement for York because of its excellent quality for processing, and does not have York spot or internal cork.

The new grape, Alwood, is a blue slipskin type which ripens 2 weeks before Concord, and is not susceptible to uneven ripening as is Concord.

George F. Waldo was selected to receive the Wilder Medal because he



Fig. 3. George F. Waldo.

has attained national and international acclaim as a plant breeder of commercially important small fruits. In addition, he has made significant contributions in the areas of fruit-bud formation of small fruits, the cultural practices of growing small fruits in the Northwest, and disease investigations. He developed the red stele (*Phytophthora fragariae*) bench screening method for handling strawberry progenies in quantity, and provided breeding material, selections, and new varieties with resistance to this root disease.

Mr. Waldo was born in Drayton, North Dakota. He received his B.S. degree in Oregon and M.S. degree in

Michigan. After spending 6 years as pomologist with the Bureau of Plant Industry at Beltsville, Maryland, he became Research Horticulturist, Small Fruits Breeding, ARS-USDA, Corvallis, Oregon. Practically all of his research and plant breeding work was done at this location.

Mr. Waldo's new berry variety introductions include 5 strawberries, 3 red raspberries, and 6 blackberries. These introductions have assumed major importance in the berry growing industry of the Pacific coast states, and produce crops with an annual value of nearly 10 million dollars. Several varieties have also been tested and named in Chile.

Two New Nectarines and a Peach Introduced by the U. S. Department of Agriculture

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The U. S. Department of Agriculture recently announced the naming and release of the 'Flavortop' and 'Fantasia' nectarines and the 'Desertgold' peach. Each was developed at the U.S. Horticultural Field Station, Fresno, California. The nectarines have been grown and tested principally in the nectarine-growing area in the San Joaquin Valley of California. The 'Desertgold' peach has been tested in the Coachella Valley of California and in Florida. A hurricane eliminated a test planting of 'Desertgold' in the Rio Grande Valley.

Flavortop Nectarine

'Flavortop' resulted from an open-pollinated seed of 'Fairtime' peach. The male parent probably was a sister seedling of 'Independence' in an adjacent row. The seedling fruited first in 1964 and later was tested as selection F58-80 in grower coopera-

tor trials. Commercial shipments of fruit have received favorable market acceptance.

'Flavortop' ripens at Fresno the second week of July, just after 'Independence' nectarine and with the regular 'Sun Grand' cultivar. The fruits are large, ovate, and freestone. The flesh is yellow, firm, smooth-textured, and of excellent quality. The fruits are highly blushed over an attractive undercolor.

Trees of 'Flavortop' are vigorous and productive. The blossoms are large-petaled and self-pollinating. Leaf glands are reniform. The time of bloom is early mid-season, which indicates a moderate chilling requirement to break the rest period of buds.

'Flavortop' has larger fruit and better quality than principal competing nectarines in its season of ripening. The chief criticism of the nectarine

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