

Promising New Delicious Color Sports

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Several new color sports of Delicious or its sports have appeared in past few years. Some of the most promising of these may be described as follows:

Red Delicious (Bridgham) is a fine color sport of Delicious originated in Michigan which to our knowledge has never been disseminated. At Geneva this variety has consistently produced fine bright colored apples of good size. Where the very dark color of some Delicious sports is considered objectionable it would seem that this selection would be worthy of a trial. Trees are available from the New York State Fruit Testing Association, Geneva, N. Y.

Royal Red is an early coloring sport of Richared and although we have not fruited it at Geneva, New York, reports from the Northwest indicate a lot of grower interest. It is available from the C. & O. Nursery, Wenatchee, Washington.

Red King is an early coloring sport of Starking, and reports from the Northwest indicate that it closely resembles Starking except that it colors much earlier. At maturity, even the fruits on the inner portion of the tree have attained a solid red color. This variety too has stimulated a lot of grower interest. Trees are available from the Van Well Nursery, Wenatchee, Washington.

Earlired, like Red King, is an early coloring sport of Starking, and the reports indicate that it is identical to Starking except that it colors earlier and attains more color at maturity. Earlired is being propagated by the Heath Nursery, Pateros, Washington.

Chelan Red originated in the J. D. Hamilton orchards at Manson, Washington as an entire tree in a Starking orchard. It is presumed to be a bud sport of Starking. Unlike Starking and Red King, however, Chelan Red shows a solid red blush rather than a solid red streak. It differs from Royal Red in being much darker in color and reports from the Northwest indicate that it colors earlier than the other early-coloring mutations. It has been suggested that Chelan Red may be too dark for consumer acceptance. This strain is not as yet available for general distribution.

In so far as we know, these early-coloring mutations do not have better color than well-colored specimens of the varieties from which they mutated. By the same token, although they develop color earlier, they do not actually reach maturity earlier. The advantage of these over older color sports would seem to be a greater assurance of good color at maturity, which would thus eliminate the practice of permitting Delicious to remain on the trees after optimum maturity in the hopes of getting better color.

A disadvantage of the early-coloring varieties is that growers may tend to pick them before they have attained proper maturity. Apples picked too early will never develop their best quality and will not store well.

All of these early coloring Delicious sports are being tested at Geneva, New York, and reports on their behavior will be made after they have been compared and evaluated.

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