

## New Variety: Stark® Crimson Gold Nectarine

JERRY FRECON<sup>1</sup>

Stark® Crimson Gold is a firm, yellow-fleshed semi-freestone nectarine ripening 1 week to 10 days ahead of Stark EarliBlaze nectarine in central California, and with Stark EarliBlaze and just ahead of Redhaven peach in the lower mid-western United States.

It is being re-introduced by Stark Bro's Nurseries & Orchards Company because of its outstanding quality and productivity in the midwest. It was originally introduced by Dave Wilson Nursery Company of Hughson, California and planted in commercial plantings in California.

Stark Crimson Gold originated as a cross between a numbered selection and Burbank July Elberta made by Floyd Zaiger at his experimental farm in Modesto, California. The variety has not only been grown and tested extensively in California and Arizona, but also has been evaluated in British Columbia and the lower mid-west. Stark Crimson Gold has been widely planted in France and Italy and is considered a premium early variety.

The fruit matures June 10 to 18th in Modesto, California, or with May Grand Nectarine. The shape is globose to oblong with a distinct suture. Average size varies from 2¼-2½ inches in diameter. The skin is yellow, covered with a crimson red overcolor. In the mid-west it is completely covered with a deep crimson red overcolor.

The flesh is juicy, yellow and crisp and firm. One of the outstanding characteristics of Stark Crimson Gold is its shipping characteristics. It is an excellent long distance shipper and can be held 3 weeks at 32°F. with no physical deterioration. Because Stark Crimson Gold colors very early (2 to 3 weeks before harvest) in the lower midwestern United States it should not be harvested until adequate sugar

accumulates. During this final two-week period it may increase ½ to ¾ inches in size. The flavor of Stark Crimson Gold is not as sweet or rich as Stark EarliBlaze nectarine. Its shelf life and flesh firmness are superior to Stark EarliBlaze.

Stark Crimson Gold has been grown and evaluated commercially for over 7 years at Dixie Orchard Company, in Vincennes, Indiana. According to Mark Byers, manager, "Stark Crimson Gold is the most beautiful nectarine and may be the best all around nectarine." It is quite promising because of its bud hardiness and is equivalent to the best peaches including Redhaven and Redskin." He rates it more bud hardy than Stark RedGold nectarine.

Stark Crimson Gold is bud hardy in Missouri but blooms earlier than both Stark EarliBlaze and Stark RedGold nectarine. In Modesto, California, it blooms ahead of May Grand. Considering this factor and its acclimation to South Central Arizona its chilling requirement is approximately 450 hours. The flowers are large, showy, and pink.

The tree of Stark Crimson Gold is vigorous, winter hardy, and productive. It is moderately susceptible to *Xanthomonas pruni*, similar to Stark EarliBlaze, and Stark RedGold nectarines. No other unusual susceptibility to insects or diseases has been noted.

Exclusive rights for propagation, sales, and distribution in North America are licensed to Stark Bro's Nurseries & Orchards Company. A United States Plant Patent No. 2825 has been issued for Stark Crimson Gold.

Trees will be available for sale to home gardeners, commercial growers, and for testing in the spring of 1980 from Stark Bro's Nurseries & Orchards Company.

<sup>1</sup>Stark Bro's Nurseries & Orchards Co., Louisiana, Mo.