

Bellaire Peach

In the orchards of Freddie Blair, Martinsburg, West Virginia, a sport of a Loring peach was discovered in 1977. Hilltop started testing and propagating it in 1979 and has since distributed it for trials throughout peach growing regions. It has been appropriately named Bellaire (Test No. FB-244).

Bellaire is a freestone and has an exceptionally brilliant red blush over a yellowish orange ground color. The fruit is pleasingly round and uniform with very little fuzz. The flesh is clear, yellow, non-browning and ripens uniformly. Flavor and quality are outstanding, according to test grower reports.

The ripening season is immediately after Redhaven, or about 10 days ahead of Loring, its parent. Hilltop and other evaluators agree that the fruit sizes very well, in a class with Loring, and better than Redhaven.

The crop can be harvested in two pickings and still maintain its unusually bright color. The fruit picks clean with no tendency to tear, and shipping firmness is said to be good.

The tree is strong, vigorous and easily trained. Foliage is very resistant to Bacterial Spot. Based on observations, including this last test winter in Michigan and West Virginia, tree hardiness is close to Redhaven and better than Loring.

Antique Apples of Virginia Origin¹

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The fact that Japanese pomologists used Ralls Janet (an old apple of Virginia origin) extensively in their fruit breeding programs is testimony enough of the importance of preserving old-time fruit varieties.

Ralls Janet is the male parent of Fukutami, and the female parent of Amanishiki, Fuji, Fukunishiki, Horei, Ingram, Kyokko, Megumi, and Shinko (Smith, 1971). Of the nine, I have fruited three and rate them as excellent apples for Virginia.

Ralls Janet originated about 1800 on the farm of Caleb Ralls in Amherst County. Like many old varieties it has lots of synonyms. I have found 56 in the literature, many are only misspellings of either Ralls or of Janet. The synonym, Neverfail reflects the late flowering nature of the cultivar.

A careful search of the pomological literature of the 18th and 19th centuries reveals that 141 apple varieties were named in Virginia that could be

considered antiques—that is—over 100 years old. A few of these were in the part of Virginia now known as West Virginia. The Grimes Golden Pippin, 1804, and its assumed seedling Golden Delicious, 1890 are examples. Waldron (=Waldron) is also a West Virginia antique sort, once widely planted in Western Virginia.

After a great deal of pomological detective work, the following old Virginia apples have been found: Bentley's Sweet, 1815; Bower's Nonpareil=Big Sweet; Father Abraham; Golden Pippin of Virginia; Gilpin, 1817; Hewe's (Hugh's) Crab; Mangum=Fall Cheese (and other synonyms), 1860; Milam; Old Town Crab=Spice of Virginia; Piolet; Raleigh; Ralls Janet; Red Cathead; Virginia Beauty; Virginia May; Winter Cheese=Green Cheese=Green Crank, 1854; Winter Queen=Buckingham (and other synonyms), 1817; and Willow Twig=James River (and other synonyms), 1848.

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