

History of the Valencia Orange in the U.S.

R. K. Soost¹

In spite of its name, the Valencia orange [*Citrus sinensis* (L.) Osbeck] does not appear to have been introduced into the U.S. from Valencia, or even Spain. Although the evidence isn't conclusive, it appears to trace to Portugal. The Portuguese variety, Don João appears to be very similar or identical to Valencia (4).

The English nurseryman, Thomas Rivers, imported a cultivar from the Azore Islands and listed it in 1865 under the name *Excelsior* (2). He sent trees from England to S. B. Parsons of Long Island, New York and to General Sanford of Palatka, Florida in about 1870. He also sent trees to S. B. Chapman of San Gabriel, California in 1876. Parsons forwarded trees to E. H. Hart of Federal Point, Florida. Sanford's trees were labeled "Brown" but Hart's trees arrived without labels. Hart submitted fruits to the nomenclature committee of the Florida State Horticultural Society in 1877. The committee named it Hart's Tardiff, published a description and recommended its trial. The name was later changed to Hart's Late or Hart. It was soon discovered that Sanford's Brown and the Hart were identical (6).

The trees received in California by Chapman were in a shipment of several unlabeled varieties, one of which proved to be late maturing and was called *Rivers Late*. Chapman later changed the name to *Valencia Late* at the suggestion of a visitor from Spain, who thought it similar to the *Naranja Tarde de Valencia* of Spain.

R. H. Gilman established the first commercial orchard in California near Placentia in about 1880 by topworking an existing 5-acre planting. However,

the first carlot of fruit was shipped in 1880 by Colonel J. R. Dobbins from a planting that had been topworked with buds, supposedly Washington navel, purchased from S. B. Chapman. However, the buds had been mistakenly cut from Chapman's *Rivers Late* trees. Through this fortunate error, which for a time threatened to end in a lawsuit, Colonel Dobbins became the first extensive shipper of Valencia oranges in California (1). It was several decades before it was determined that Hart's Tardiff and Valencia Late were identical.

Although the introduction of the Valencia into the U.S. clearly is traceable to Thomas Rivers and in turn to the Azore Islands, the origin of the Valencia is unknown. Lee and Scott (5) suggested that some oranges grown in southwest China were very similar to the Valencia and may have been taken to Europe by early Portuguese or Spanish voyagers. Cooper (3) more recently suggested that the very old Portuguese cultivar *Selata* is identical to Valencia and Don João, except for earlier maturity. The *Selata*, according to Cooper, also resembles the *Sukka* of Shanton, China. He suggests that the *Selata* originated from *Sukka* and the Valencia in turn from *Selata*. However, concrete evidence is lacking.

Whatever its origin, the Valencia orange has become the most widely grown cultivar of the sweet orange group because of its adaptation to a wide range of climatic conditions. It is of major importance in California, Florida, South Africa, Australia, and in the Mediterranean area. It is also grown in Brazil and other South American countries.

¹Department of Botany and Plant Sciences, University of California, Riverside, CA 92521.

Various budlines have been selected and established in the various countries where Valencia is grown. Many of these have been named, although most may not differ from the original. Slight differences in tree growth and fruit characters have been detected among some of the selections.

In addition to bud selections of Valencia, several other cultivars throughout the world appear to be identical to Valencia. These include Lue Gim Gong and Pope from Florida, Natal of Brazil, Calderon of Argentine and Harvard of New Zealand (4). The Lue Gim Gong and the Harvard originated as seedlings of Valencia and are undoubtedly of nucellar origin.

References

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Fruit Cultivars—A Guide for Commercial Growers

A new 82 page publication by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Ontario, Canada presents up to date information on cultivars of the following crops: Apple, Apricot, Grape, Peach, Nectarine, Pear, Plum, Blueberry, Currants, Gooseberry, Raspberry, and Strawberries. Current cultivar planting trends are presented as well as a list of recommended cultivars and suggestions regarding their suitability for various production areas and climatic zones. The "General Planting" list includes only cultivars of proven worth. The "Limited Planting" list includes cultivars with special uses or attributes, such as suitability for early markets, exceptional hardiness, etc., and the cultivars of some worth whose suitability remains in question. The "Trial Planting" list includes new cultivars of potential value which require

further commercial evaluation to establish their suitability for more widespread use.

In addition information is provided on average harvest dates, bloom dates, length of bloom period and pollen compatibility among cultivars. Also included is information on virus status and current cultivars being tested. The recommended lists have been determined by Horticulture Research Institute staff in consultation with growers, processors, shippers, marketing agencies and federal and provincial personnel. This is an excellent comprehensive publication prepared by specialists with extensive experience with the types of fruit covered. It is available from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and will be invaluable to all those with climatic conditions similar to those in Ontario.