

Observations on the Origin of 'Delicious' Apple

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It is interesting to read different reports of the origin of 'Delicious' apple. A succinct account is that of Smith (4) "U.S.A., originated as a sprout from a rootstock on farm of Jesse Hiatt near Peru, Iowa; introduced by Stark Bros." Such a sprout originating from a rootstock in the 1870's is very likely to have been a seedling of unknown parentage. Another is that of Blodgett and Aichele (1) who give a tabular entry of the origin as follows, "Chance seedling under a Bellflower tree." While a literal interpretation could include a sprout arising from the rootstock, the wording implicates 'Yellow Bellflower' as a parent of 'Delicious.'

Fear and Domoto (2) write, "It was in 1872 that Jesse Hiatt of Peru, Iowa discovered a sprout arising from the roots of a 'Bellflower' seedling which had been previously cut down twice because it was growing out of the row." and "Hiatt realized when the sprout developed into a tree and began to fruit that it was not like the 'Bellflower' parent from which it came. The aroma was different and the fruit had a distinctive shape with prominent calyx lobes."

The above was not the first suggestion that 'Yellow Bellflower' was a parent of 'Delicious.' Maas (3) writes, "Because the sturdy sprout was growing near an old Yellow Bellflower tree, Hiatt surmised that the latter might be one of the parents, and he wondered what kind of fruit the seedling would bear." and "The Bellflower fruit was attractive, of good quality,

with a peculiar long pointed shape terminating in five points at the blossom end. Because of these unusual characteristics he was convinced that any offspring of the 'Bellflower' would surely produce fruit with similar attributes." Thus, according to Fear and Domoto (2), Hiatt noted that his seedling did not resemble 'Bellflower.' On the other hand Maas (3) indicates that Hiatt expected the offspring to be similar to 'Bellflower.'

I have long thought that 'Yellow Bellflower' and 'Delicious' had very little in common, although both were favorite varieties in my father's orchard in Nova Scotia where 'Yellow Bellflower' was better known as 'Bishop's Pippin' (after the cleric who planted it, not for the family name). Thus, I was pleased to come across Taylor's account (5) which is clearly written, unambiguous, and differs from the other accounts in several important ways: "This variety first came to notice in the orchard of the late Jesse Hiatt, of Peru, Madison County, Iowa, about 1881. It was then a sprout, supposed to be about 6 years old, from the stock of a 'Yellow Bellflower' tree, the top of which had been destroyed. The beauty and fine quality of the fruit attracted Mr. Hiatt's attention and he at once began its propagation in a small way for his own planting."

A review of U.S.D.A. yearbooks on my shelf shows that Taylor was Assistant Pomologist in 1893 and reported on the work of the U.S.D.A. Division of Pomology in that year. He was Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry

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at least until 1929 and reported on many new fruit varieties during the intervening 35 years.

It seems to me from, Taylor's account, that it is unlikely that 'Delicious' is a seedling of 'Yellow Bellflower.' Moreover, I believe to be apocryphal all suggestions that Hiatt forecast any attributes of 'Delicious,' that the stock was repeatedly cut back or that it was out of the row, or that Hiatt ever said of it (2, 3), "If thee must live, thee may." As Upshall (6) concluded his preface, "Very occasionally, if seedlings are used as rootstocks, a desirable new variety can develop if the scion is killed or broken off and the seedling becomes the tree." I think this is the true origin of 'Delicious,' and would speculate that Upshall may have had

this specific example in mind as he wrote.

Literature Cited

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Evaluation of Vineyard Peach as a Peach Rootstock

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Abstract

The vineyard peach population of Serbia, Yugoslavia is being sampled and trees selected for propagation and testing. Results thus far indicate that there is a high degree of genetic diversity in this population of peaches, some with tolerance to cold and disease stress. Differences have been found in tree vigor, fruit quality, fruit size, yield, seed germination, and vigor of the seedlings. Twelve of 44 selections have been selected for further testing. Several selections including MG/62/87 and GR/65/87 are particularly desirable in regards to regular and abundant cropping of the mother trees as well as a high percentage of seed germination and seedling vigor.

Introduction

The peach, *Prunus persica* (L.) Batsch originated in China. Peach cul-

ture spread through Persia, Turkestan, and the Caucasus to the Mediterranean basin, North and South America, Southern Africa and Australia (1, 5). The peach was introduced to Greek culture in the time of Alexander the Great between 400 and 300 B. C. It was introduced in the area of today Macedonia and Serbia shortly after the beginning of Christianity (1, 2).

Based on production, the peach is in eighth place among fruits and third place among deciduous fruits in the world. Italy (1,533,000 mt, 1981/85) is first in world peach production followed by the USA, Greece, Spain, and France (5).

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