

The Weatherspoon Plum in British Columbia

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The Weatherspoon plum originated in Elgin, Oregon, and was introduced about 1920. It appears to have been brought to British Columbia about ten years ago and was advertised as a superior strain of Early Italian Prune. The Summerland Station has now had Weatherspoon in fruit for two years, in an orchard where it can be directly compared with the regular Italian prune and also with the early sports of Italian, De Maris, Greata and Richards.

It can now be stated that Weatherspoon is not an Italian prune, either of early or regular season. The tree is definitely of plum, not prune, type.

The variety ripens approximately with regular Italian and is not by any means in the same season as the early sports of Italian, which ripen two to three weeks earlier.

The fruit of Weatherspoon is longer and more tapered than Italian, and in most specimens there is a more distinct neck at the stem end. In comparison with Italian, Weatherspoon is more reddish-purple and less blue in color; firmer in texture, being almost tough; showed more pre-harvest shrivel in 1954; has a very sweet, plum flavor, fairly high in quality but quite lacking the characteristic rich, full prune flavor of Italian at its best.

The pit of Weatherspoon is noticeably less free than that of Italian. The stem is much more persistent and when removed tends to tear the flesh, whereas the stem of Italian usually pulls cleanly. In 1954 the fruit of Weather-

spoon showed a greater number of weak and open sutures than that of Italian.

Weatherspoon is not recommended to the growers of British Columbia as a substitute for the recognized early sports of Italian, which are De Maris, Greata and Richards.



Improving Fruits Through Radiation

Apple and grape in various stages of development are being exposed to X-rays and gamma radiation at the Brookhaven National Laboratory and then grown and observed at the New York Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva. Charlotte Pratt, of the Geneva Station reports, in this connection, that fruit varieties vary in their sensitivity to gamma radiation. Golden Delicious apple appears more sensitive than Macoun and certain other varieties. Exposed plants may develop abnormal leaves, stems or flowers, and buds may be entirely killed.

Abnormalities that occurred the first year on irradiated grape cuttings and apple scions did not appear in the second season.

Although it is hoped that radiation will induce desirable sporting, irradiated plants at Geneva have not as yet been grown to fruiting, and the practical possibilities of this method have not yet been determined.

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