

## LETTERS

**For Better Evaluation of  
New Apples**

Dear McDaniel:

A function of *Fruit Varieties and Horticultural Digest* is to present as clear a picture of new fruit varieties as possible to the members of the American Pomological Society and to the public. Right now, to me, of major importance are the good and bad prints of the best new varieties, both for actual planting and for wider testing. Thus, last spring my brother started planting the Davey apple commercially in Vermont as a variety to plant with McIntosh, somewhat as a Baldwin replacement. He had had it in bearing for several years, and then the Davey started some cracking last fall! Careful estimates of this limitation need to be made. Some in Canada think highly of the Sandow as a Baldwin substitute; and it is a beauty at its best!

I have been impressed with the value of the summer meetings of the peach breeders. They met first at Fort Valley, Georgia; then at Urbana, Illinois; next at Vineland, Ontario; and this past year at South Haven, Michigan. By surveying the breeding work, the selections, and varieties at each of those stations, the group has clarified the objectives in breeding, has improved methods, and has arranged for additional testing of selections.

They seem to evaluate new varieties and selections unusually well.

The berry and grape groups have also been holding field meetings for years past—the strawberry group began about 1929, with a meeting at our old Bell Station near here. They have not met every year but the meetings have been very effective as have the blueberry and raspberry meetings. The grape group (muscadine group) have gone further and have lists of recommended varieties and varieties to be discarded. They have helped also in having poorer varieties dropped by commercial propagators.

For apples, annual field meetings might help also. Breeders and specialists could survey the tree characteristics of promising new varieties and selections as well as methods and objectives of breeding. There are several stations with extensive breeding programs to visit—New Jersey, Virginia, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and several Canadian, to mention a few. I have a feeling that perhaps now some well planned meetings might advance the work greatly.

Right now in the Stayman Wine-sap regions, a variety to plant in place of it is a live topic. Formerly we thought of Stayman growers as well off, for it has a good tree, keeps well, and is of high quality. Now, with two successive years of bad cracking in this area, we are not so sure. Turley does

not seem as dependably productive and is not so good a dessert apple, though it is higher colored and a good culinary apple.

We hope that Dermen in obtaining tetraploids for use in breeding may help with the answer for new varieties but, commercially, that will be twenty to thirty years hence. If and when he gets a full tetraploid Winesap for breeders to cross with diploids to make unlimited numbers of triploids like Stayman, Turley, Arkansas, and much better ones, the answer will come.

But we need better evaluation of the varieties and selections that are now in sight. Rome has been one of the most dependably profitable varieties but I dislike to think of this eastern United States having Rome as the major variety for the next fifty years. I doubt whether Rome would compete with oranges and other fruits which have improved notably in quality in recent years. Comparing Rome (its red sports, of course) with other varieties that might be planted to replace it or Stayman, what suggestions can be seriously offered? Do we have enough tests and information to answer the question?

There are at least four good looking Rome crosses—one each at the New Jersey, Virginia, and Ohio Stations and one at the Downing Fruit Farm in Ohio. Maybe a good project to start with—you could start it—would be a careful survey of the tree and fruit qualities of each, first by those

knowing these varieties and then by a group. Would the apple industry be in a better competitive position with one or more of these extensively raised?

Of course, other varieties should be surveyed. The Melrose, of Ohio, is promising. If it has good enough color generally and is productive, I would think it might be an improvement over Stayman and Baldwin in some area, for it is better quality (to me), better size, and better for handling. This is, of course, only one of many new varieties to be compared.

As you know, I am interested in pears also and perhaps more pear meetings like that held by Drain at Knoxville in 1945 would be helpful.

GEORGE M. DARROW

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## **Pears in Southeast Alabama**

Dear Mr. McDaniel:

Leaf-spot is second only to fire blight as a pear pest in our humid section. Bartlett seedlings are so badly affected that it is impractical to grow them. Many strains of Pineapple pear are defoliated by the time fruit ripens in July or August. Orient is, of course, resistant and I believe Baldwin is affected even less. It is my candid opinion, in fact, that Baldwin, where it can be grown, is the better pear.

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