

Sweet Cherries—Present and Future Varieties

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Sweet cherries are one of our most attractive and delicious fruits and are the earliest of the tree fruits to ripen. Their season is past before plums and peaches are on the market and usually before the hot dry weather interferes with their development.

The tree of the sweet cherry is less hardy than that of the sour cherry, and in areas where the temperature occasionally drops below -20° F they can not be grown commercially. In New York the main commercial areas are in the Hudson River Valley, along the shores of Lakes Ontario and Erie, and around the Finger Lakes.

Two Groups

The sweet cherries are divided into two main classes, namely, the soft-fleshed or heart group and the firm-fleshed or bigarreau group. Some varieties as the Yellow Spanish might be classed as intermediates. The early varieties are mostly soft-fleshed while the lates are generally firm-fleshed. The soft or early types are less subject to cracking during wet seasons. Both types are subject to brown rot, although there is variety variability in susceptibility.

All varieties require spraying to check insect and brown rot injury. Virus diseases must be controlled by planting healthy stock and eliminating chokecherries in the vicinity.

Early Varieties

SENECA is an early, black cherry which originated at the Experiment Station at Geneva. The tree is vigorous, upright, and productive. The fruit is small, soft-fleshed, juicy, and melting. It is sweet and pleasantly flavored when mature. Seneca ripens approximately two weeks before Black Tartarian which it resembles. Unfortunately, like all other very early, black sweet cherries, Seneca is liked by the birds. The only practical way to overcome this difficulty is to cover the trees with cheese-cloth or some other coarsely woven cloth.

EARLY RIVERS, the leading early, dark-colored cherry in Europe, ripens a few days later than Seneca at Geneva. The tree is large, vigorous, upright-spreading, hardy, and productive. The fruit is large for an early cherry, roundish heart-shaped with flesh reddish, juicy, tender, rich, and sweet. Recent trials in the Hudson River Valley indicate that it is probably the best early cherry for that area.

SCHRECKEN BIGARREAU is an early, large, black cherry with a firm flesh that ripens about with Black Tartarian. Due to its firmer flesh it is a superior shipping variety. It is a German cherry which has been sent out for trial by the New York State Fruit Testing Association. Preliminary tests in the Hudson River Valley indicate that it is worthy of a more extensive trial. One cooperator writes, "It is a wonderful cherry, coming a day or so before Tartarian, rather hard of flesh, cracks some, should be named Early Schmidt."

Midseason Sorts

VICTOR is a large, firm, light-colored cherry of excellent quality originated at the Canadian Horticultural Experiment Station at Vineland from a seed of Windsor. The color is more attractive than that of Napoleon. It ripens about a week earlier and is less liable to crack. The tree is vigorous, upright, and productive. The fruit is excellent canned and offers possibilities for a maraschino trade.

SODUS, a product of this Station, resembles Napoleon. The tree is vigorous and productive. The fruit is large, firm-fleshed, good in quality, and ripens before Napoleon, but like Napoleon it has a tendency to crack during rainy seasons. It also is promising for the maraschino trade. Sodus will pollinate the Napoleon and Emperor Francis.

VERNON is another cherry from the Vineland Station and, although a Windsor seedling like Victor, its fruit is black. The tree is strong, vigorous, and an early bearer. The fruit is large, very firm-fleshed, and similar to Windsor in appearance. One grower describes it as, "A glorified Windsor, only larger and of better quality, prone to cracking in wet seasons".

Later Ripening Kinds

EMPEROR FRANCIS is one of the most attractive of the light-colored cherries. When fully ripe its yellow color is nearly overspread with bright shining red. The tree is a strong, hardy, upright grower, and remarkably productive. The fruit is large, rounded heart-shape, firm-fleshed, sweet, and very rich. It is less liable to crack than the Napoleon and remains in good condition longer. Those interested in a reliable, late yellow sweet cherry should not overlook this variety.

GIL PECK is a sister to Sodus but is black like its Giant parent. This variety was named in honor of the late Professor Gilbert W. Peck of Cornell, at the request of the Indians of the Six Nations, whom he befriended. The tree is large, productive, and an early bearer. The fruit is large, similar to Giant in appearance, very firm-fleshed, richly flavored, and late in ripening. It is still on trial and is too new to evaluate.

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GIANT is a large black cherry of the Bing type originated by Luther Burbank. Its season is later than that of Bing and Schmidt. The trees are strong growers and productive, in fact, the trees may become so overloaded that the size of the fruit is reduced. The flavor is mild, sweet, and very pleasing. The cherries are less prone to crack than those of Bing. One cherry grower in the Hudson Valley who has fruited the Giant for a number of years states that this variety needs plenty of fertilizer and Mazzard understock to obtain growth status for a crop.

HEDELFINGEN is a large, late, black, firm-fleshed cherry of the Lambert type that originated in Germany, about the middle of the last century. The variety is being highly recommended in Canada, and is well liked in the Hudson River Valley. The tree is strong, vigorous, and productive. The fruit is much like Lambert but has shown less tendency to crack. For those who desire a large, late,

black sweet cherry, Hedelfingen should be given a trial.

NOBLE is a very large, late black cherry grown in England in 1611. Just why it has taken so long to introduce such an excellent cherry into this country is a mystery. The tree of Noble is strong and vigorous. Its reliability as a bearer is still to be determined. On the Station grounds it is one of the largest and handsomest of the late black cherries.

Unnamed Station Seedlings

In the Station cherry breeding work many promising seedlings have appeared. A few of the most promising are being propagated for a more extensive trial. **STATION 146**, a late, large black cherry has already been sent out by the Fruit Testing Association.* **STATION 591**, a large black cherry that is very late in ripening also appears noteworthy. **STATION 1512**, a black sweet cherry is outstanding for its size and quality.

*The New York State Fruit Testing Cooperative Association operates a "new variety" nursery at Geneva, whence the station introductions and some other uncommon fruit varieties are available.—J. C. McD.

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