

What's New in Peach Varieties

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At the present rate of variety introduction, the average grower is at a loss to know when to change to something else and when to stick with more or less standard sorts. On top of that, few growers know which of the new varieties are available at nurseries and which are still in the testing stage.

Unfortunately, some new varieties get too much promotion before they are tested under conditions other than those where they originated. This leads to disappointment in many cases because too many trees are planted before it is known what their performance will be.

The interest in earliest varieties is largely confined to the far south. Here it is that earliness brings a premium price, often at a sacrifice of quality. Nevertheless, many of the new early varieties are so far superior to the old ones that they deserve a trial in commercial plantings.

Among the earliest new varieties still in the testing stage are Maybelle and Tulip. The former is white, the latter yellow. Both follow Mayflower in ripening but are well ahead of the main group of early commercial peaches characterized by Uneeda, Mikado and Erly-Red-Fre. If these new types prove desirable under present tests, they

will be in considerable demand by southern planters.

Following this really early season, we come to the best new early clingstone that has yet been introduced. This is the Dixired, a large peach with yellow flesh and most attractive appearance. In comparison with a peach like Red Bird, its quality could be termed excellent but, of course, it isn't in a class with the best freestone varieties which follow it by a couple of weeks.

As a result of two warm winters in the south, Dixired has partially dropped from attention. This was due to its higher chilling requirements which caused it to leaf out late and drop its fruit. It is expected to be in the limelight again this summer, however, after which plantings are likely to boom again next year. The wise planter should anticipate this situation and gain a year by planting now if he is in an area ideal for the marketing of early fruit.

The "big three" early freestones—Dixigem, Redhaven and Jerseyland—are running neck-and-neck in popularity. Dixigem still excels in the far south because of its rounder form. This is in contrast to the more pointed tip which Redhaven and Jerseyland peaches have in that area. In the middle south, and from there on north, all three varieties

tend to be quite round. The choice is then a matter of size, color and market favor. Redhaven excels in color and for processing use, while Jerseyland sizes somewhat better unless Redhaven is heavily thinned. Dixigem has not yet had a wide trial in the North.

Other early freestone varieties still in the testing stage are Early East, Starking Delicious (and other early strains of the Burbank Elberta), Early Jubilee, Missouri, Prairie Dawn, Prairie Daybreak, Prairie Sunrise, Merrill Beauty and Merrill June. It's not too much to say that one or more of these may be in wide favor at some future date, just as present favorites have become popular in the past.

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No peach has yet taken the place of Golden Jubilee, despite its many faults. But in the ripening season that follows it by a few days, the competition is very keen. This is also a few days before Halehaven and Burbank Elberta. Fair Beauty is also holding its own in the niche, largely because of its beauty and ability to escape late frosts. On the other hand, it has a weak, short-lived tree and is a semi-clingstone.

The best new peaches in the season just referred to are Triogem, Fireglow, Southland, Fairhaven and Newday. While they all show many of the same desirable qualities, they are not equally well adapted to the many peach districts clamoring for "the perfect new variety."

Triogem and Fireglow at present seem best adapted to the middle south; Southland to the far south; Newday to both areas; and Fairhaven to the north.

Southland seems to lack hardness, while Newday is somewhat lacking in shipping quality. Fireglow has a tendency to crack a bit. Triogem and Newday are large and attractive enough to satisfy the most particular consumer and should be more widely planted than they are at present.

In the Halehaven—Burbank Elberta season, the main new contender is Sunhigh. While a low chilling requirement makes it suitable for southern conditions, it is highly susceptible to bacterial leaf spot when planted on light soils. Thus its commercial future is uncertain, regardless of the fact that there are few, if any, other varieties with a higher eating quality.

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Between this group and Elberta, we have Goldeneast and Sullivan Early Elberta, both approaching commercial recognition. There are other early strains of Elberta still in the testing stage, some of which may very well replace Sullivan Early Elberta some day. Goldeneast has not stood up too well during the last two mild winters, but may regain favor since more normal winter conditions have returned.

Elberta is still planted on a larger scale than any of its newer competitors. But we may well watch

Redskin, Halegold and Hale Harrison Brilliant. In the north, these newer varieties should have a higher eating quality than Elberta; while in the south, their advantages are less evident. All of these, however, have lower chilling requirements than Elberta, which will permit them to be grown farther south.

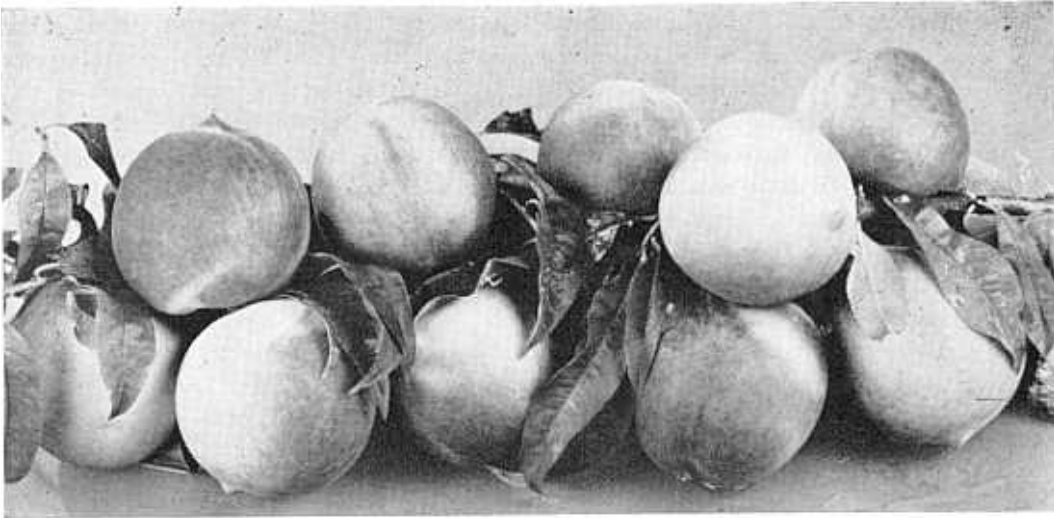
Following Elberta, the most promising new peach variety is Afterglow. Rio Oso Gem is another with rising popularity, but it has the disadvantage of small tree size and high susceptibility to insect pests. Autumn is a most promising successor to the Augbert and Late Elberta.

Although white peaches are losing ground in commercial orchard areas, they are gaining favor for local and roadside markets. Fortunately, there are now several relatively new, high quality, white va-

rieties for this purpose. In order of ripening, they are Best May, Raritan Rose, Nectar, July Heath, Redrose, Stoner and Laterose.

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The future in peaches and peach varieties is bright indeed. Already the variety list is diversified to the point where one can find a good yellow peach for every season and every need. But at the rate new varieties are being introduced, we are only beginning to see what the peach of the future may be like. The main need is to keep up with the peach breeder by testing these new varieties in all important areas. Several state experiment stations are doing this effectively, but small-scale testing should also be done by some of the leading and more discerning fruit growers.—Reprinted from *The Packer*, February 3, 1951.



July Elberta (Burbank Elberta) is popular and its early sports are promising