

'Van' Sweet Cherry

FRANK KAPPEL¹

'Van' sweet cherry was the first cultivar released from the Summerland sweet cherry breeding program which began in 1936. Open-pollinated seed of 'Empress Eugenie' was collected and germinated by A.J. Mann in 1936. He made the selection in 1942 and named it in 1943. The name 'Van' was chosen to honor J. R. Van Haerlem, Pomologist at the Horticultural Experiment Station, Vineland, Ont.

'Van' is an open-pollinated seedling of 'Empress Eugenie' which is an old French variety thought to be a Duke cherry (5). The Dukes are believed to be hybrids between *Prunus avium* and *P. cerasus* (5, 7). 'Empress Eugenie,' a chance seedling, first fruited about 1850. It was named 'Impératrice Eugénie' and found its way to North America. The first record of its presence in North America was in the catalogue of the American Pomological Society in 1877 (5).

One of the original descriptions of 'Van' suggested that the tree was a heavy annual bearer, vigorous and upright (6). Fruit set was described as heavy and well distributed on the limbs with heavy clusters on the younger wood. The fruit was described as being as large as 'Bing,' slightly firmer, and of equal quality. It was considered very attractive with a bright lustre. The short stems were considered a problem at the time (as they still are). The resistance to rain-induced cracking was considered superior to 'Bing.' Maturity of 'Van' was reported to be slightly earlier than 'Bing.' It was being recommended as a pollinizing variety for 'Bing' and 'Lambert' at the time of release.

'Van' is a precocious and heavy producer bearing fruit in large clumps which can lead to size problems and susceptibility to fungal decay. Trees that are proper-

ly pruned produce fruit that are large with the average fruit weight at Summerland being over 10g. As reported by Fogle et al. (3) 'Van' responds favorably to special cultural practices such as increased pruning. Fruit quality of 'Van' is good with total soluble solids concentration averaging over 19% and having a good balance between sugar and acid when ripe. Fruit texture is also good. Fruit shape is blocky. As mentioned above, the short stems can present harvesting problems. Also, 'Van' appears to be susceptible to pitting, a storage disorder of cherries.

By 1956 'Van' and 'Lambert' were being recommended for planting in British Columbia orchards, whereas 'Bing' was no longer recommended. The 1958 B.C.F.G.A. Quarterly Report (1) warned growers of the potential of small fruit size due to overcropping. It was suggested that to prevent this, annual moderate pruning along with nitrogen fertilizer was necessary. Recommendations were made in 1960 to stop planting any new cherry trees other than for pollinizers. The marketing organizations were concerned about the amount of cherries being produced at the time. The 1960 Orchard Survey of the Okanagan Valley shows that there were a total of 151,118 cherry trees in the Okanagan Valley. Of those, 19% were 'Van' trees. In the 6 to 10 year old category 'Van' accounted for 24% of the trees and in the 1 to 5 year old age group they accounted for 22% of the trees. By 1992 'Van' was the second most important variety after 'Lambert.' With a renewed interest in cherry production in the Okanagan Valley growers are replacing their 'Van' orchards with newer varieties, most developed at the Research Centre at Summerland. 'Van' has also made a major impact on cherry pro-

Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre Contribution No. 1077.

¹Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre, Summerland, B.C., V0H 1Z0 Canada.

duction around the world whether as a major cultivar [such as in France where it is the third most important fresh cherry (2)] or as an important pollinizer for the main cultivar such as 'Bing' in the Pacific Northwest of the U.S. Franken-Bembenek (4) reports that 'Van' is one of the few foreign cultivars to have been successfully introduced into Germany.

'Van' has also played an important role in sweet cherry breeding programs around the world. It has made a major impact in the program at Summerland where nine cultivars are direct descendants of 'Van.' These include: 'Sumpaca Celeste,' 'Sumnue Cristalina,' 'Lapins,' 'Newstar,' 'Salmo,' 'Summit,' 'Sunburst,' 'Sweetheart,' and 'Sylvia.' Also, 'Santina' and 'Sumleta Sonata' have 'Van' in their pedigree. 'Van' and descendants of 'Van' are still being used in crosses at Summerland. Other breeding programs have made successful use of 'Van' including: Czech Republic ('Techlovan' and 'Vanda'); New York ('Somerset'); and Washington ('Olympus' and 'Rainier').

Since its introduction in 1944 'Van' has developed into a cultivar that has made an

impact in all the sweet cherry industries around the world. With the ongoing breeding program at Summerland new cultivars continue to be developed that will surpass the quality of 'Van.' Many of these new cultivars will owe a great deal to 'Van.'

Literature Cited

1. B.C.F.G.A. 1958. Quarterly Report. Vol. 3(3):8.
2. Edin, M., J. Lichou and R. Saunier. 1997. Cerise, les variétés et leur conduite. Ctifl, Paris.
3. Fogle, H. W., J. C. Snyder, H. Baker, H. R. Cameron, L. C. Cochran, H. A. Schomer and H. Y. Yang. 1973. Sweet cherries: Production, marketing, and processing. USDA-ARS Agr. Handbook. 442:12.
4. Franken-Bembenek, S. 1996. Sweet cherry production in Germany. Compact Fruit Tree. 29:59-69.
5. Hedrick, U. P. 1915. The cherries of New York. New York Agr. Exp. Sta., Geneva NY.
6. Mann, A. J. and F. W. L. Keane. 1951. Fruit variety tests. The Van cherry. Dominion Expt. Station Summerland, BC, Progress Report 1937-1948: 22-23.
7. Zielinski, Q. B. 1977. Modern systematic pomology. Pomona Books. Rockton, Ont. Canada.

A History of Fruit Varieties

History of Fruit Varieties comprises 12 years of articles and cover illustrations of *Fruit Varieties Journal*. It features a beautiful color cover drawn by Lynda E. Chandler and was produced to commemorate 150 years of service to the fruit industry by the American Pomological Society. Please support the society by purchasing a copy for yourself and several as gifts. Available for \$25 plus shipping from Good Fruit Grower Magazine, 105 South 18th Street, Yakima, WA 98901 or order by phone 1-800-487-9946, fax 509-453-4880, e-mail getit@goodfruit.com.

Note Cards — Commemorating 150 Years of Service

by

American Pomological Society

APS, with the help of Lynda E. Chandler, produced a box of 8 note cards—2 each featuring the cover art of 4 different fruits: 'Delicious Apple,' 'Redhaven' peach, 'Marion' blackberry and 'Senga Sengana' Strawberry. Available from: APS, 102 Tyson Building, University Park, PA 16802 for \$8/box plus shipping. Please help APS honor 150 years of service.