

Peach Variety Testing in Southwestern Ontario*

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Southwestern Ontario, for purposes of this article, is located between the Niagara fruit growing district and Michigan, and is enclosed by Lake Erie in the south and Lake Huron in the northwest. Peaches have been grown here for more than a hundred years, but not without severe setbacks from winter injury in 1899, 1920 and 1934. In recent years orchards have been planted mainly to the productive yellow-fleshed freestone varieties such as Redhaven, Golden Jubilee, Halehaven and Elberta. Fortunately, two of these varieties, Golden Jubilee and Elberta, are preferred by the expanding processing industry for canning in halves because of ease of peeling without lye; and a third variety, Halehaven, can be used for baby food. The fourth variety, Redhaven, does not peel well, but is ideally suited to the basket trade and could be quick-frozen should some interest develop. Redhaven has set an excellent standard in appearance, quality and productiveness which should be maintained throughout the season from early August to mid-September by wise selection from available varieties.

This is the main purpose of the peach variety trials at Harrow, in which more than 150 varieties and

superior selections from various parts of Canada and the United States have been included since 1935. The possibility, too, of finding better varieties for local processing has not been overlooked, particularly in the season between Golden Jubilee and Elberta. To date little interest has been shown in white-fleshed peaches or in the non-melting yellow-fleshed clingstone varieties such as Ambergem, which seems well adapted to the area.

Winter injury has not caused serious concern, because the onset of winter has invariably been gradual, with temperatures rarely falling below zero in the test orchard. During the testing period 1935-1956 an absolute minimum temperature of -9°F . was recorded in 1944. A frost (26°F .) during bloom in 1946 did considerable damage to bloom of Golden Jubilee and Elberta with some loss in yield, but Redhaven and Halehaven were not seriously affected. These favorable climatic conditions have made growers somewhat indifferent to low temperature effects, with the result that many promising new varieties are already planted in commercial orchards.

Bacterial spot of peach (*Xanthomonas pruni*) attacked foliage and fruit of certain varieties from 1950 to 1952,

TABLE 1. Varieties of peaches recommended for commercial planting in southwestern Ontario. The letters B and P in brackets following the name, denote whether the variety is suited to the basket trade (B), processing (P) or both (PB)

<i>Early-Season</i>	<i>Early-Mid</i>	<i>Mid-Season</i>	<i>Mid-Late</i>	<i>Late-Season</i>
	Redhaven (B)	July Elberta (BP)	Kalhaven (BP)	Early Elberta (BP)
	Golden Jubilee (BP)	Valiant (BP)		Redskin (B)
	Envoy (BP)	Southland (B)		Elberta (BP)
	Triogem (B)			Vesper (B)

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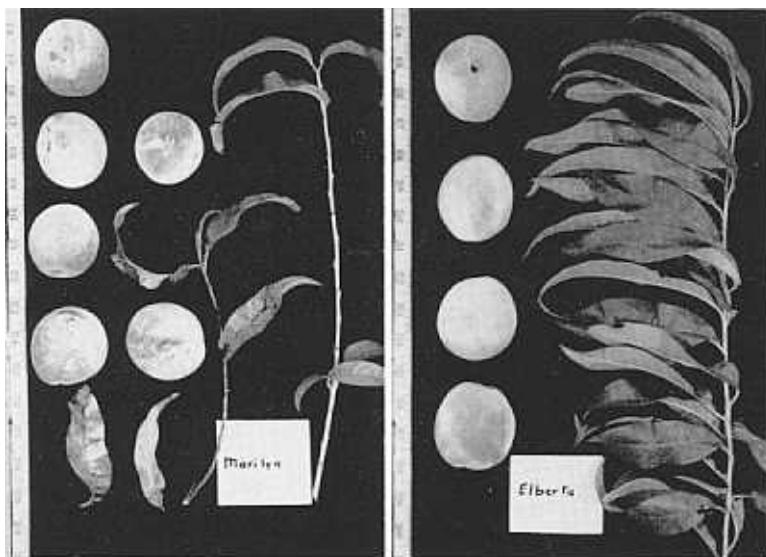


Fig. 1. Heavy bacterial spot infection of fruit and foliage on Marilyn variety at left. Disease was not present on Elberta (right). (Photo taken Sept. 1952.)

but has only been seen occasionally in recent years on highly susceptible types such as July Elberta, Valiant and Vesper. Some doubt exists regarding the advisability of planting such varieties locally if less susceptible varieties can be found. Commercial resistance to bark canker (*Valsa cincta*) which can seriously shorten the productive life of the tree, and to the fruit diseases brown rot (*Monilinia fructicola*) and black mold (*Rhizopus nigricans*) has not been found as yet. Spray programs, however, have been devised locally which will provide satisfactory control in most seasons if combined with proper cultural methods.

Several new peach varieties may become important in orchards of the future. These preferred varieties are self-fertile, yellow-fleshed, and have produced satisfactory yields of fruit at Harrow. (Table 1.)

Considerable interest is being shown in Keystone which follows Golden

Jubilee, and in Richhaven and Loring for the mid-season to obviate the necessity of using Valiant and July Elberta because of their susceptibility to bacterial spot.

Some of the new varieties may supplement established varieties such as Redhaven, Golden Jubilee and Elberta, but it is doubtful if they will replace them. Both the large and small flowered types of Early Elberta are supplementing standard Elberta in new plantings because of comparable processing qualities and some advantage in earliness. The slightest tendency to cling at the pit is not acceptable in varieties ripening later than Redhaven, a defect which might limit the plantings of Triogem. A condensed list of recommended varieties for this district should therefore include: Dixired, Redhaven, Golden Jubilee, Envoy, Valiant or July Elberta, Kalhaven, Early Elberta or Elberta.