

The Merrill Peaches

45

A number of peach varieties have been introduced in recent years by Grant Merrill, Red Bluff, California. Most of these are adapted primarily for California conditions, although some show possibilities for other areas. It would be rather difficult to make any conclusive statements concerning this group of varieties, as to their present or future status, until they have undergone a longer trial period in the commercial districts of California. It can be said, however, that a number of the Merrill peaches are extremely promising.

Merrill June is a very early semi-freestone shipping peach. It is yellow fleshed, and firm enough to ship well. It resembles *Fay Elberta* in shape and fruit type and ripens off the tree after being picked while firm. The tree produces well when young and sets very heavy crops regularly. Estimated dates when ripe: Dinuba, June 13-20; Modesto, June 20-30, 1952.

Merrill Gem ripens a few days after *Merrill June*. It is a yellow fleshed, cling-stone shipping peach; very large, very red and very firm. Tree is very vigorous and sets moderately, so as to reduce thinning costs and make sizing easier.

Merrill Beauty ripens early, a week before *Redhaven*. The fruit resembles *J. H. Hale*. It is round, smooth and nearly fuzzless, has a bright undercolor and attractive red blush and ships well. This variety develops its best flavor when picked firm ripe and ripened off the tree. Tree is very large and sets moderately. It is a very promising variety.

Merrill Aurora ripens about with *Redhaven*. It is a very firm, large semi-freestone, and takes on a polish when brushed.

Merrill Goldrush ripens a week ahead of *July Elberta*, is of *Fay Elberta* shape, highly colored and quite firm. It will

stand the warmer winters of Southern California where it ripens earlier.

Merrill Bonanza will probably be ready for introduction next year. It ripens during the *Kim Elberta* season, but is red all over, very firm and of good size.

Merrill Hale ripens so as to fill the gap between *July Elberta* and *Elberta*. The fruit is intermediate in type between *July Elberta* and *J. H. Hale*. It is larger, firmer and better colored than *July Elberta*, but not quite as large or as firm as *J. H. Hale*. It is an excellent shipper, round, uniform and smooth, with a bright undercolor and good red blush. Tree is very large and produces very heavily.

Merrill '49er is a large, firm, well colored peach ripening just ahead of and overlapping into the season of *J. H. Hale*. It is very much like the *Merrill Goldrush* except for its season.

Merrill Splendor ripens about August 20-30 at Red Bluff. The fruit is very brilliantly colored, smooth and very firm. It is a yellow fleshed freestone of high quality. It is pollen-sterile and needs cross-pollination.

Merrill Fiesta ripens at the same time as *Late Gold* and *Late Rio* and resembles these latter two varieties very closely. It is a very firm, highly colored freestone for the late market and fine for freezing.

Merrill Rodeo is a very late, highly colored, very firm yellow fleshed freestone. It sizes well, and is good for storage or freezing.

EDITOR'S NOTE: After the above descriptions were in type, we received Mr. Merrill's 1953 catalog-calendar, with more peaches in color than we ever saw on another calendar. We have temporarily taken it from the wall to get the descriptions of his five "home orchard" peaches and two nectarines, of which the *Merrill Sunrise* nectarine is offered as a commercial shipping variety.—J. C. McD.

Two Nectarines and Five Home Orchard Peaches

Mr. Merrill says that these varieties for home use are selected primarily on the basis of flavor. "Flavor," he says, "is the most important characteristic of a home orchard peach. Furthermore, that flavor must develop while that peach is soft-ripe on the tree, as that is the way home orchardists want it. On the other hand, commercial varieties must develop their best flavor when picked firm-ripe and ripened off the tree." (Some physiologists will dispute whether any peach is actually at its best when so handled, but the fact remains that it can't be shipped after getting soft ripe.) "I have selected my home orchard varieties for their best flavor while the fruit is soft-ripe," with color, firmness, and heavy cropping not given the same consideration that they must have in the case of a commercial peach.

Seasons given below are for the climate of the Central Valley of California.

Merrill Brilliant is a brilliantly colored white fleshed peach, of delicious flavor, ripening early to mid-June. The tree is extremely vigorous.

Merrill Delicious is a yellow fleshed freestone, ripening mid-June to late June. Its unusually high eating quality is held well through the freezing process, and the flesh does not darken on exposure to air. The tree is vigorous and healthy.

Merrill Dandy combines a nice balance

of sweetness, acid and aroma with an attractive yellow flesh. The season of this freestone variety is early to mid-July. Although the tree is vigorous, it needs less pruning and thinning than most varieties.

Merrill Nectaheath is considered by the originator to be the most nearly ideal peach he knows for home use. It's a nectarine-peach cross, combining the fine flavor of the nectarine with the very large size of the J. H. Hale. Its white flesh is firm enough to can well, but soft enough to be good eating. Season is late July to early August. It normally sets lightly on a very vigorous tree, requiring almost no pruning or thinning.

Merrill Schooldays ripens about the time school vacations are over, late August to early September. It is a fine flavored yellow fleshed freestone, fine for home canning.

Merrill's home nectarine, the *Casa Linda*, is described as a fine white fleshed freestone with an aromatic, sweet flavor, juicy and very large for a nectarine. Its season is early to mid-August.

Merrill Sunrise nectarine, described as the earliest of all nectarines, ripens ten to fourteen days ahead of John Rivers (early June in the San Joaquin Valley). It is very red, very large, very firm and a semi-freestone. The tree is a much more regular bearer than John Rivers. The introducer thinks this nectarine will be extremely profitable as a shipping variety.

Puritan - A New Early Red Apple

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There has been so much interest among Massachusetts growers in Mass. C-31 seedling that we have decided to name and introduce it in spite of rather limited trial of it in terms of number of trees. Puritan originated from the cross Mc-

Intosh × Red Astrachan made by the late Professor F. C. Sears at the University of Massachusetts about 1929. It is an attractive, well colored red apple of medium size which retains its size well even with a full crop. The quality is good for