

The Capulin Cherry of Ecuador

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Dr. W. Popenoe described and illustrated the capulin cherry in 1922 in the *Journal of Heredity*. Introductions into the United States were made at that time and at various times in the years since then.

A planting of seedling capulin cherries fruited at the United States Plant Introduction Station at Chico, California. Two of the best seedlings were saved, and these have continued fruiting. However, because of the superior qualities of our sweet and sour cherries, this fruit has not attracted much attention.

I first saw the capulin cherry in Mexico, and later in Guatemala, El Salvador and Ecuador, during a trip in 1952 through Central and South America. A few observations made during this trip and a few notes dealing with the characteristics of this cherry and its possible value in the United States follow.

It was around Ambato, Ecuador, that I saw the capulin cherry in greatest numbers—tens, possibly hundreds of thousands of trees. It seems to be the favorite fruit to the Indians there. In the market of the city of Salicito, I counted 180 Indians selling only capulin cherries, and there were probably as many or more selling these cherries along with other produce. The trees in this region seemed immensely productive, and large ones were estimated to be producing at least 1,000 pounds of fruit.

In a recent botanical review, McVaugh* placed capulin cherry as a sub-species *capuli* of *Prunus serotina*, the small-fruited native black cherry

of eastern North America. The capulin is distinguished chiefly by its much larger fruits, about the size of small Montmorency sour cherries. However, the fruits are meaty and are marketed by the Indians in large baskets and burlap sacks without loss of juice. Dr. Dermen recently obtained the chromosome number of seedlings grown at Beltsville. They are tetraploids having the same number of chromosomes as sour and Morello cherries and twice

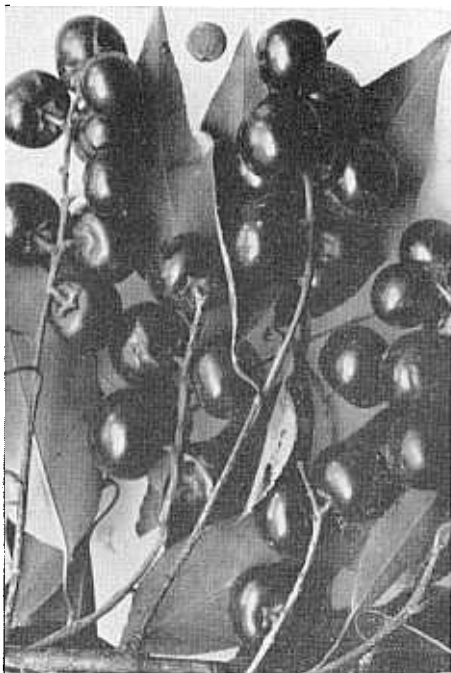


Photo by Popenoe

FIG. 1. A selected capulin cherry from Ambato, Ecuador. This fruit is dark maroon to black, rather firm, and about the size of the Montmorency sour cherry.

*McVaugh, Rogers. A revision of the North American black cherries (*Prunus serotina* E., and relatives). *Brittonia* 7(4):279-315. 1951.

the number of sweet cherries. It is not known whether capulin cherry can be crossed with the sour cherry or whether hybrids of such a cross would be fertile.

The seed remains viable for a relatively long time. A high percentage germinates and the seedlings grow rapidly. Capulin cherry has fruited very heavily in Chico, California, under irrigated conditions where frosts are not often severe. It may be adapted to those parts of southern United States where freezing weather does not occur and there it may be useful, especially as a home garden fruit. Little is known about its disease susceptibility, except that it is subject to a leaf rust and to mites.

The capulin cherry, as grown in Ecuador, has a slight to marked bitterness, suggestive of the wild black cherry of eastern United States. It is difficult to compare its flavor with that of the sweet cherry, *Prunus avium*. Undoubtedly, those who are accustomed to eating the sweet cherry will prefer its flavor to that of the capulin. However, those accustomed to the capulin may prefer its flavor, just as some prize the grapefruit, in spite of its bitter tang. The flavor of selected varieties of the capulin should be very acceptable in the southern areas of the United States where it can be grown, and where the sweet cherry cannot.

Letters are coming in to the editor asking that the names of certain people be added to the list of fruit breeders and testers that appeared in the Spring 1954 issue of the DIGEST. In order that none shall be slighted, a supplementary list is being prepared and will be published in the fall issue of the DIGEST. We would greatly appreciate receiving other names of worthy fruit breeders and testers which were unintentionally omitted from the original list.

The Redglobe Peach

The peach variety Redglobe, a cross between a seedling of Admiral Dewey x St. John and Fireglow, was released in May by the United States Department of Agriculture, at Beltsville, Maryland. The freestone fruit matures about 15 days before Elberta, has firm, yellow flesh of good flavor, and a bright, attractive skin color. It seems acceptable for canning and attractive as a frozen product.

The trees of Redglobe are productive and vigorous, blossom about the same time as Elberta, are about as susceptible to bacterial spot as Elberta, and have approximately the same chilling requirements.

Redglobe has been tested at State and Federal Experiment Stations in a number of the important peach areas, and has been found very promising in California, Washington, Texas and Michigan.

Edward J. Upton, Box 283, Sandy Creek, New York, would very much like to obtain scionwood of the French Pippin, Swaar and Singafeather apple varieties. If any of our readers have one or more of these varieties, I'm sure Mr. Upton would very much appreciate hearing from them.

Readers:

We welcome you to send us letters that you feel would be of interest to other readers of the DIGEST. Many of you have available to you bits of invaluable information dealing with trends and performance of fruit varieties, both old and new. Won't you share them with us by letting us publish such items in the DIGEST? We would all be grateful, and you would be making a significant contribution toward the improvement and dissemination of fruit varieties.—G. M. KESSLER, *Editor*