

Plums in the Northwest

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The only European plum varieties grown commercially in the Pacific Northwest are the Italian Prune, similar prune varieties, and the President plum. Most of the fruit from the Italian types are shipped fresh or canned. Very few prunes are dried in the Northwest at present.

Italian Prune (Fellenberg) is a productive variety on which the plum industry in the Northwest is based mainly. Recent demands have been for earlier fruit for fresh shipment, and the earlier types have therefore been widely planted.

Richards Early Italian ripens ten days to two weeks before the Italian Prune. It apparently originated as a sport of the latter variety in the Yakima Valley of Washington, and was first propagated commercially by the May Nursery Company about 1935. This variety has been in demand particularly in the early shipping areas.

Demaris is another early Italian type named after a grower at Milton, Oregon. It has been propagated primarily by the Lafayette Nursery Company, Lafayette, Oregon, but a number of other nurseries in the Northwest have also been handling it. The exact origin of the Demaris prune is not known. This variety ripens about with Richards Early Italian and appears to be somewhat more susceptible to leaf disorders.

Weatherspoon, a seedling of unknown parentage, and originating at Elgin, Oregon about 1920, has been handled as a shipping plum along with the Italian types. The large fruit of this variety are shipped about

a week ahead of Italian. The fruit colors early and is sometimes picked as soon as the minimum color requirement is satisfied and consequently shipped unripe. This variety requires pollination by other Italian Prune types that bloom at the same time.

Trees of these three early Italian Prune types has been offered for sale as Early Italian. Hence, there is some question as to whether they have always been maintained as separate varieties. The tree and fruit of Weatherspoon are distinctive, but it is difficult to distinguish between the other two early Italian types.

Stanley, because of its hardiness and productiveness, seems promising for the Northwest. Although the tree is different from the Italian Prune type, the fruit is very similar. A canned product quite similar to the "purple plum", as the Italian types are often labeled, is obtained with the Stanley. Its taste is slightly different, yet pleasing.

President has been grown commercially on a limited scale in this area. It is hardy and productive. The fruit ripens late in September, however, which is sometimes too late for good ripening weather in the Northwest.

Japanese plum plantings consist predominantly of Santa Rosa, with Beauty and Climax as pollinizers. Some Late Santa Rosa and Formosa are also grown, and there are limited commercial plantings of Duarte and Climax. Elephant Heart produces the best quality fruit in this area, but pollination difficulties have limited its acceptance.

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