

The Nomenclature and Registration of Fruit Varieties*

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One hundred and fifty years ago the Horticultural Society of London was making a plea for some sort of system in the naming of apple varieties. That plea could be made today with even more justification; but we are now taking steps to insure that it need not be made in the future.

Towards the end of August, 1962, a small working committee, composed of representatives of most of the major fruit-growing countries, held a two-day meeting at Brogdale Farm, home of the Ministry of Agriculture National Fruit Trials near Faversham, Kent, England, under the chairmanship of its director, Mr. J. M. S. Potter, to discuss the nomenclature and registration of fruit varieties.

This meeting was the outcome of informal talks held in Cambridge, England, in 1960, by members of the International Commission for the Nomenclature of Cultivated Plants, and owed much of its success to Dr. H. B. Tukey, Chairman of the Fruit Commission of the International Society for Horticultural Science, and Professor, Emeritus, Michigan State University, and to Dr. F. R. Tubbs, director of East Malling Research Station, England. The working committee was already agreed on the importance of the correct naming and subsequent registration of fruit varieties, and the meeting was held to discuss an internationally acceptable method of bringing this about. Discussion was based on the work already done in this field by the National Fruit Trials, and

the method finally agreed on was more or less that worked out by them over the past ten years.

A stable nomenclature is important to any class of beings. Some of the more popular varieties of fruit have acquired dozens of synonyms, translations and variations on the original name. An average example is the old Russian apple 'Aport,' known generally in America and Europe as 'Alexander' or 'Emperor Alexander.' This now has roughly forty six synonyms and variations, a number of which are in current use. Synonymy has been further confused by errors. For instance, at some of the great fruit shows in London some sixty or seventy years ago, which were so fully reported, quite a number of varieties were exhibited under the name of another variety, and in the reports these were wrongly said to be synonymous. The statement was repeated elsewhere, and so the muddle grew.

Sifting the correct names from synonyms and errors necessitates recording a brief history and description of each variety, and this automatically creates a register to which it is only common sense to add new varieties as they are brought to notice. In fact, if new varieties are to be registered, a register of existing varieties must first be created, partly to insure that no name is used twice.

Names of fruit varieties have been in great confusion for centuries, largely as a result of their free exchange throughout the world. When

*Strictly speaking, the term "cultivar" should be used instead of "variety." The former is an international term signifying a variety that has arisen in cultivation, as distinct from a botanical variety; but this distinction having been made, we will continue in this article using the word "variety" which in this context is quite clear.

imported from abroad, names have often been translated, sometimes erroneously, and later perhaps retranslated into something different. Some have been changed completely, in ignorance of the true name or because of the difficulties of pronouncing a foreign name, or because a name acceptable in one language might be embarrassing in another.

There is such a vast number of fruit varieties that the committee decided it would be best for each country, or group of countries, to produce its own register for subsequent amalgamation into an international register. Whoever undertook this task would find that the various national registers overlapped considerably owing to the way most fruit varieties have travelled about the world. This would mean that the international register would not be nearly as large as the sum of the national registers, but collating the information against the many varieties common to several countries would be a tedious task. The factual information should not offer any great problem, but the descriptions would be bound to vary considerably, as climate influences varietal characteristics. Each national register would contain a brief summary of the climate of the country, and the compiler of the international register would have to refer to these in collating the descriptions.

The foregoing will call to mind Brooks & Olmo's "Register of New Fruit and Nut Varieties" which has been of great help to the compiler of the British Apple Register. The main difference of course is that our register includes old as well as new lists of synonyms and references, and more descriptive detail.

For Great Britain, the National Fruit Trials is the official registration authority for all kinds of temperate fruits. The apple being the most widely grown of these in this country,

we have started with the apple register—in fact we started nearly ten years ago. The method used is to study the British fruit literature—pomologies, journals, catalogues, to discover the varieties that have been grown in this country during the past hundred years. The apple tree is long-lived, and a variety listed a hundred years ago might well be alive today even without the help of the commercial propagator. When it is necessary to trace a variety farther back than a hundred years, or beyond the limits of Great Britain, the older British literature as well as the fruit literature of many other countries is consulted, since many varieties grown here are of foreign origin.

The 12,000 or so names discovered so far have had to be sifted for synonyms and erroneous forms of the name, and fortunately less than half have proved to be legitimate names. Some of the varieties included may no longer be in existence, but without proof to the contrary, we must assume that they are. These will be distinguished typographically from the names of varieties known to be in existence, and from synonyms.

Basically, the information given for each variety will consist of synonyms, references, history and a description. It will depend, in many cases, on what is available in print and in records, but whenever possible the descriptions will be made from living material. There are over 2,000 varieties in the National Fruit Trials apple collection, one of the purposes of which is to provide material for this work.

The history will be mainly names (of parents, raiser etc.) and dates (crossing, introduction etc.) and the description will be just sufficient to tell the inquirer whether or not he is on the right track; for further information he will have to consult the references quoted. Illustrations will not be included because of the cost, but the

reader will be referred to published illustrations where these are reasonably good. The idea of producing a detailed pomology instead of a register was most tempting, but had to be abandoned because of the number of varieties involved. However, later on it may be possible to produce more specialized registers, based on material extracted from the main one, but containing far more detail.

When the register is complete, we shall be ready to accept new varieties for registration as they are named. No name already in the register will be available for the new variety, and it will be our duty to see that the name chosen conforms with the International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants. There will be no attempt to alter existing names to conform with the Code, as the public, at least in England, does not take kindly to this sort of action; but certainly new names will have to conform, and changes will be allowed only with the greatest reluctance; otherwise, we shall have the old muddle repeating itself.

We shall also have to do our best to satisfy ourselves that the variety offered for registration really is a new one, and not an old one resuscitated. Ideally, this should be done by growing it ourselves, as would be done with vegetables and flowers; but the time needed for tree and even bush fruits to show all their characters is far too long for this to be feasible, and we will have to rely on inspecting the original tree and studying the flowers, fruit and foliage in comparison with the varieties growing in our collection and with published descriptions.

Will all this detailed work be worth while? Having struggled for years in the thickets of apple synonyms, we believe it will; and we hope that the fruit industry will agree with us, and will welcome and use the register when it appears.

Goldspur Delicious

Fruit growers, nurserymen and scientists met in mid-September to celebrate the spur-type Starkspur Golden Delicious recently introduced by Stark Bros. Nursery. It was the second such celebration held in recent years. About two years ago a similar group met at Hood River, Oregon, to honor Starkrimson, a new spur type of the Red Delicious.

Speakers at the Parker, Washington meeting included scientists from British Columbia, Oregon, Washington and West Virginia. Fruit growers, nurserymen and extension men were also included in the program. All gave praise to the spur types in general. It was the general opinion that we will see a gradual increase in per acre production as the new spur types, including both Red and Golden Delicious, come into heavier bearing.

Paul Stark, Sr., who was in charge of arrangements for the celebration, also played an important role in introducing the Golden Delicious in 1916. This Golden Delicious spur type introduction is a real milestone in the long history of Stark Bros. Nursery.
—Bill Luce, Yakima, Wash.



Fig. 1 Elon Gilbert, admiring the original tree of the new Starkspur Golden Delicious, which was found in his orchard at Cowiche, Washington.