

Fruits in Alaska*

RICHARD H. WASHBURN

Palmer, Alaska

It will probably be news to many of you to learn there are edible fruits that do fairly well in certain, climatically favored parts of Alaska. One of the areas in which cultivated fruits may be grown on a small scale is the Matanuska Valley. This valley is frost free from May 15 to September 5, has a maximum temperature of 85°F, a minimum temperature of -35°F, and an annual precipitation of 15 inches. Our farm is located in this Valley.

The apple clones that appear to do well here are the following: Heyer 12, Rescue, Jaques, Anaros, Osman, Sylvia, Adam, Dauphin, Red Siberian, Dolgo, Hopa and the baccata species. (Many readers will recognize a number of these as crabapples.)

Cherry species that are able to survive are *Prunus padus*, *P. virginiana melanocarpa*, and *P. demissa*. *P. besseyi* (Western sand cherry) survives in sheltered places, but not in the open. We have *P. americana* and *P. fruticosa*, but they haven't bloomed for us yet.

Of the small fruits, almost all red raspberries are satisfactory, but are too soft to handle commercially. Latham is one of the commonest varieties.

The only really hardy strawberry that is generally available is the Sitka hybrid. The fruit of Sitka is soft, with pale pink skin and flesh. Ogalalla is probably the hardiest of the available commercial varieties. A few grow Red Rich, Catskill and some others; but these usually die out in a year or two. Several all-red varieties are being developed by Kallio at the Alaska Agr. Exp. Station.

Currants, both red and black varieties are satisfactory, and Red Lake is one of the most common. We have lots of wild currants as well. The Pixwell gooseberry and others, whose names are unknown, do well here. The serviceberry also thrives.

The Tanana Valley also grows fruit. It has a maximum temperature of 97°F, and a minimum of -65°F. The *M. baccata* is the only kind of apple that will survive here, except for some seedlings of Russian origin, which need protection from spring frosts, but not from winter cold.

Prunus padus and *P. virginiana* seem satisfactory here. Most red raspberries survive, but not the cultivated currant or gooseberry. The Sitka hybrid strawberry is hardy enough in this valley.

The Anchorage area is much the same as the Matanuska Valley in terms of fruit adaptation. In addition, some large fruited seedlings of apple and Yellow Transparent are found along the inlet.

At Hope, across the Cook Inlet from Anchorage, one can also find many large fruited apples of unknown origin, as well as the Yellow Transparent. Some of the seedlings may have originated from seed brought from the Scandinavian countries.

At Haines, too, you will find large-fruited apple seedlings, Yellow Transparent, and even the Bing sweet cherry, and morello cherries, and the more tender varieties of strawberry.

No disease or insect control programs are followed anywhere in Alaska, although aphids are occasionally a problem, and leaf spots are com-

*Adapted by the editor from a letter by Dr. Washburn, of the Washburn Farm and Nursery.

mon. There appear to be no viruses. Fruit plantings are very small. There probably isn't a planting as large as an acre except at the Experiment Station.

Yellow Kroosje Plum as a Rootstock for Peach and Plum

Some months ago, the editor received an inquiry from William A. Letsinger, of Sacoxie, Missouri, concerning the value of the Yellow Kroosen or Yellow Kroosje plum as a dwarfing rootstock for peach or plum. The request for information was published in the last issue of Fruit Var. & Hort. Digest. Since then, we received the following three responses:

The Kroosjes plum (*Prunus domestica*) is of Dutch origin, and occurs in two forms—Kroosjes Yellow and Kroosjes Blue. The former is the preferred one. Both are propagated by layering, but not with best results.

As a rootstock for plum, neither type is reliable, since not all varieties are compatible with them. Peach, on the other hand, unites well with Kroosjes Yellow, and produces trees of medium vigor. The variety Mayflower is an exception; it fails to grow on this rootstock. Peach also unites well with Kroosjes Blue; but this combination gives a less vigorous tree. Kroosjes Blue might therefor be considered a more desirable rootstock for dwarfing of peach than Kroosjes Yellow.

Fruiting of peach trees on these rootstocks seems to be delayed, when compared with peach on peach seedling rootstocks.—*Karl D. Brase, N. Y. State Agr. Exp. Sta., Geneva, N. Y.*

The Yellow Kroosje (also called Yellow Cross) is a plum rootstock much used in Holland, and obtainable from any Dutch rootstock nurseryman. To my knowledge, it is semi-dwarfing, although less so than St. Julian A. Its

leaves are attached at right angles to the twig, and the lenticels on the twig are small.

However, for greatest dwarfing effect, I prefer the St. Julian A, which is compatible with all varieties tested on it at East Malling.—*F. M. Knuth, Knuthenborg, Denmark.*

If Kroos is synonymous with Kroosje and Kroosen, it is a dwarfing rootstock for peach from Holland which tolerates wet soils. Mr. J. R. Roaf, a plant material inspector turned nurseryman, is offering peaches on Kroos rootstock, and should know a lot about its dwarfing capabilities. His address is Rt. 1, Bcx 362, Yoncalla, Oregon.—*Milo Gibson, Portland, Oregon.*

Tioga, a New California Strawberry Variety

The University of California has released a new strawberry variety named Tioga, primarily to replace Lassen. It has consistently out-yielded Lassen as well as other important varieties. The fruit is attractive, long and conical, with a tendency toward wedginess, slightly lighter in color than Lassen, with a very glossy finish. It is firmer than Lassen and the other University of California introductions, and its achenes are flush with the fruit surface, which make it an excellent shipper.

According to R. S. Bringhurst, who describes Tioga in California Agriculture (April 1964), this variety has performed best in California from summer-planted, stored plants.

Walter Tonjoes, former Supt., Graham Exp. Station, Mich. State Univ., has said that the Double Red Jonathan apple (Waynesboro Nurs.) and Dark Red Jonathan (Maloney Bros.) are solid red and look promising.