

The Michigan Peach Breeding Project

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The Michigan peach breeding project was started in 1924 with the general objective in mind of developing varieties maturing earlier than Elberta that would, in addition to having good appearance and quality, be sufficiently firm to withstand handling and shipping. Practically all varieties available at that time, maturing earlier than Elberta, were woefully weak in this respect.

One seedling among a number of J. H. Hale x South Haven hybrids showed so much promise that it was named *Halehaven* and released in 1930, a dangerously short time in which to test and release a new peach variety. However, later development justified its early release as it has become widely grown and has made a definite contribution to the peach variety list. It has also proved to be of value in breeding work as it transmits earliness and high color to its offspring.

Kalhaven, (J. H. Hale x Kalamazoo) was the second variety to be released—in 1936. It is not widely known and is probably of limited value. However a number of Michigan growers have replanted it for the season just ahead of Elberta, a season in which there is a scarcity of good varieties. It is hardy, productive, and ships well, but has a strong tendency to overbear and shows marked lack of vigor when growing on soils of medium or low fertility.

Redhaven, (Halehaven x Kalhaven) was introduced in 1940. It is a brilliantly

red peach maturing about 30 days before Elberta. It is very attractive in appearance, firm, ships well, and hangs tenaciously to the tree a long time without dropping. The flesh is bright yellow with only a trace of red at the pit and has a remarkable resistance to "browning", which makes the variety popular for freezing. Redhaven has most of the characteristics necessary for an outstanding peach, but it has one serious fault—lack of size. The trees must be pruned and thinned thoroughly if a high percentage of first grade peaches are to be produced.

The fourth and latest of the new peach varieties released by the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station is the *Fairhaven* variety, (J. H. Hale x South Haven). The first buds were released in August, 1946. This variety matures a week before Halehaven and at the end of the Redhaven season. It favors the golden color but has an attractive red cheek. The tree has had an exceptionally good production record and has shown ability to withstand disagreeable spring weather and produce a crop. It is about the same in winter hardiness as Halehaven. The fruits size better than Halehaven under heavily loaded conditions. The flesh is firm, and resists "browning" better than average. The quality is good, but probably not as good as Halehaven or Redhaven.

Objectives of Breeding Program

As the peach breeding project has progressed, the general objective has

taken on new features, the two principal points being as follows:

1. To combine the excellent appearance and flesh characters of Redhaven in a series of varieties having larger size.
2. To develop in these varieties somewhat greater resistance to winter cold.

The amount of added resistance to winter cold in some of our better varieties would not need to be great to be of immense value to certain peach growing areas. Often a degree or two greater resistance would mean the difference between at least a moderately good crop and total failure.

Clingstone Varieties For Canning

There is another phase of the Michigan peach breeding project that has not been mentioned and that has to do with the clingstone peach. California has practically cornered the canned peach market with its attractive canned clingstone peaches. The California clingstone varieties were tried in Michigan, but did not succeed there. However, the Ambergem variety developed by the New Jersey Experiment Station has been successful in Michigan and about 100,000 trees are now being grown in the state. New clingstone varieties are being sought that will be useful in Michigan to extend the present season.



Red Raspberry Varieties in Massachusetts

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Raspberry growing in Massachusetts has been severely hit in the past decade or two by a combination of virus diseases and adverse winter conditions. Black caps seldom survive more than three to five years and even reds are easily infected with virus since practically every sizeable patch of wild reds is infected with mosaic.

Interest in this state is almost entirely in the red raspberry, since it survives better than either blacks or purples and also because practically all the crop goes

to the fresh fruit market. Cuthbert, which formerly was the chief commercial variety, is still recognized as about the best in eating quality. Latham, because of its superior winter hardiness and greater resistance to mosaic, has long since superseded Cuthbert as the leading commercial variety, but it has never taken the place of Cuthbert as a high quality dessert variety.

New Varieties

Among the newer varieties which are being tested at the Massachusetts State