

Vesta, a Productive, High Quality Almond Variety

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Vesta is a new, productive, high-quality almond variety developed by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Vesta, which interpollinates with the leading variety, Nonpareil, produces higher quality nuts than the other varieties used primarily to pollinate Nonpareil.

The nuts of Vesta are larger than those produced by Nonpareil (Figure 1). The shape and color of the kernels are similar but not identical. The shells of Vesta nuts are soft enough for easy hand cracking. Yet the closed suture of the shell protects the kernel from worm damage—an ever-increasing problem in almond growing in California. The trees of Vesta grow vigorously, branch well, and advantageously fruit primarily from spurs. Nut production is at least equal to Nonpareil, and the leaves are more resistant to red spider mites than those of Nonpareil.

Vesta blooms at the same time as Nonpareil, thus furnishing optimum opportunity for interpollination. It ripens about 14 days later than Nonpareil.

Vesta, originated at the U. S. Horticultural Field Station, Fresno, California, resulting from a cross of a late-flowering Nonpareil sport $\times$ 5A-3 [(Nonpareil $\times$ Jordan) $\times$ Jordanolo] [Nonpareil $\times$ (Nonpareil $\times$ Eureka)] made at the John Weststeyn ranch at Pipon, California, in March 1956. It fruited first in 1960 and was selected for its productivity and nut qualities by the author. It has produced heavily each subsequent year, as have grafted trees propagated from it.

Vesta has been grown and tested as No. 16.5-88 in plots operated cooperatively with the Fresno State College Foundation and in cooperators' orchards from Bakersfield in the southern San Joaquin Valley to Red Bluff in the northern Sacramento Valley. The almond industry of the United States is centered in these two valleys.

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No signs of the heritable "bud failure" or "crazy top" disorder have been noted in the original tree or trees propagated from it. Since Nonpareil and Jordanolo, both of which are subject to "bud failure," are involved in the parentage of Vesta, close scrutiny of propagation materials should be made and any suspicious clones discarded.

Vesta was named for the Roman goddess of the fire and hearth, and hence cookery. This seemed appropriate for a food product which is being used increasingly to garnish the main dishes of a meal.

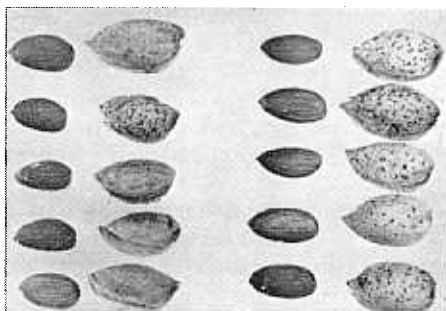


Figure 1. Nonpareil (left) and Vesta (right) nuts showing similarity of shape and color of kernel and the improved shell structure in Vesta.

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