

New Walnut Variety ‘Solano’ Released

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The UC Davis Walnut Breeding Program has recently released a new walnut variety, ‘Solano’. This variety harvests early-mid season with light colored kernels, high yield, large nuts, and solid attractive shells. ‘Solano’ has leafing, flowering, and harvest dates that are very similar to ‘Vina’ but ‘Solano’ has better kernel color and tree structure and should be of particular interest to growers in the Sacramento Valley.

‘Solano’ produces large, uniform, oval-shaped nuts with good appearance, solid seals and shells, and easy removal of halves. Nuts average 14.6 grams with 8.0 g kernels and 55% kernel weight. The kernels have very good color, averaging 93% light and extra light and 54.8 RLI in trials. The shell and seal strength is clearly sufficient for use as an in-shell nut if desired.

‘Solano’ is precocious, 100% laterally fruitful, and has exhibited excellent yields in campus and grower trials. Known as selection ‘UC95-011-16’ prior to its release, ‘Solano’ originated as a seedling from a 1995 cross of ‘Tulare’ sibling ‘UC67-13’, used for quality, and the variety ‘Chico’ used for yield. It has been evaluated as a selection in regional blocks in Butte, Yolo and Fresno Counties and in grower trials in Tehama, Butte, Sutter, and Yolo counties. Grower feedback has been very positive.

‘Solano’ leafs out a week later than ‘Payne’, ‘Serr’, or ‘Ashley’ with a protandrous bloom habit (the catkins shed before the female bloom). It harvests ahead of ‘Tulare’ or ‘Howard’ and more than two weeks before ‘Chandler’. ‘Solano’s’ timing is similar to ‘Vina’ but has a more easily managed canopy, better kernel quality and larger nuts. Canopy structure in grower trials has been upright and without evidence of limb breakage to date. Tree size at maturity is expected to be similar to Chandler and overlapping pollen sources include ‘Tulare’, ‘Chandler’ and ‘Howard’.

Due to its later leafing date and male-first bloom habit, this variety will have less exposure to spring rain than another recently released variety, ‘Ivanhoe’, and is therefore anticipated to be less susceptible to blight and more suitable for planting in the Sacramento Valley. ‘Solano’ is now commercially available and can be ordered from any licensed nursery.

