

# Master Gardener Favorites

## Nectarines, Plums & Cherries

### Cherries:

I've got two new trees planted just last year they are ? **Tartan and Stella**; I think. I didn't want the Bing which you find many places.

I only have a **Bing** Cherry tree. I had one for 37 yrs. before it succumbed to old age, sunburn, and canker. I have a new baby one now. My tree never needed a pollinator in my yard. It always had lots of cherries. I never saw a cherry tree in a neighbor's yard, but there must have been one somewhere. Come early May the cherries started to color up and the Starlings came to help themselves. We had a deal, though. They got the cherries from over 8 ft., I got the rest except for the ones my dogs could reach. Delicious!! They lasted until mid-June. Last year my new little tree had one cherry which I had to beat off a Mockingbird to enjoy!

Love **Rainier**-sweet, flavorful, firm; also **Stella** -good I believe self-pollinating. **Black Tartarian** is also good and a good pollinator!

I have a **Black Tartarian** and a **Bing**. A Montmorency used to accompany them, but my pigmy goats found the young tree particularly enjoyable, butting the limbs, and eating the leaves. I'm certain they wouldn't have touched the fruit, finding it a bit too sour. This tree was a self-pollinator and would have made excellent pies. The tree is gone, as are the goats.

The **Tartarian** is my favorite, as its dark purplish-black skin encases a deliciously sweet flavor (akin to a good Pinot Noir!) It's ripe for the picking in mid-May, and if you don't pick them on the very day they're ripe, the birds will clear the tree in a day. That's some job, since our tree is approximately 25 years old and 30' tall. It's a hardy tree and disease resistant. It was also a good anchor for one end of a hammock, unless the fruit is dropping or the birds overpopulate in the spring.

The other end of the hammock is a large **Bing**, which serves as the pollinator to the **Tartarian**. The fruit ripens about 2 weeks after the **Tartarian**, is a deep garnet in color, darkening to almost black as it reaches the end of the ripening stage. That's when the birds attack. It's prolific, and the branches reach out like arms, making the harvest much easier than the **Tartarian**, whose branches reach heavily toward the sky.

I've read that the life of a cherry tree is about 20 years. My small 30-year old orchard of cherries, apricots, and apples hasn't heard that rumor. And they're a showcase in the spring! And cherries are a great antioxidant!

### Nectarines:

**Independence Nectarine**, sweet and juicy, yellow fruit, freestone, usually harvests in early July, beautiful frilly pink blossoms in the spring. Great to eat fresh or to make jams and jellies.

**Arctic Glo Nectarine**, sweet, white fleshed fruit. Great to eat fresh.

I planted 2 new trees last year and can't locate my list to tell you what they are but I have a **Late Le Grand** which is on order to be planted soon.

**Arctic Rose**. White flesh. Ripens July-Aug. Great flavor! Birds & squirrels love them too, so I put netting over the dwarf tree & secure it around trunk. Hopefully some fruit saved.

**Independence Nectarine**-nice good fruiting and hang-time. Good flavor even before fully ripe-still crisp.

**Le Grand Nectarine:** Red/Yellow skin, yellow flesh with a rich sweet flavor

#### **Plums:**

**Santa Rosa Plum**, sweet, flavorful, large fruit, usually harvest in early July. They are great to eat fresh or to make jams and jellies.

I have one plum in my small yard, a pluot, variety **Flavor King**. The tree stays moderate size, and the plums do have delicious flavor. The skin is only slightly sour, and the riper fruit. The tree does not seem to over set and even without thinning it sizes very well. Maybe it is because I do not have another plum in my yard. I let them get a little soft on the tree for the best sweetness, but of course some folks prefer them a little more tart. They last well in the fruit bin of my refrigerator. One draw back - the birds love them. They are a nice reddish/purple and evidently the birds really like that color to pick on. My apricots and peaches never get that much bird damage, so evidently birds are not as attracted to those colors, but they hit the plums hard. This also encourages the green fruit beetle which likes to feed on the bird damaged areas. I have found that by leaving the bird damaged fruit in the tree, that the birds and beetles tend to go back to that same fruit and leave the yet undamaged fruit alone a little longer, allowing me to pick undamaged fruit with the ripeness that I prefer. Despite this, the tree has enough fruit for all and I have not felt the need to net it.

I bought a **Santa Rosa** plum a year ago and it gave me lots of fruit in June. I pruned it, more for shape and height control in August and hoping for the same amount of fruit this year. It does get some shade in the early morning.

**Elephant Heart plums** are a favorite of mine because of the rich red sweet flesh - a bit of a contrast to the somewhat tart skin. Thanks to a long harvest season, this fruit can be enjoyed from mid to late season; the fruit may need to be thinned early on to prevent branch breakage. Give these trees full sun, deep watering with good drainage, and enjoy.

**Santa Rosa's** are a must! They are a pollinator for pluots and other plums. They ripen in June. I like them when they are firm, crisp and yellow inside. My husband likes softer and dark purple inside; much riper.

**Elephant Heart** - are unique. They're shaped like a heart and greenish purple on the exterior when ripe. When you cut or bite into them they are dark purple.

Plum-wow- we have **Santa Rosa**-always good, good producer-very flavorful; **Satsuma**-just ok-small fruit-not our favorite-probably a good jam fruit-pretty red flesh; our favorite is a pluot-and not sure the variety(**Flavor Supreme?**)-great hang time-crunchy, juicy, like a sweet-tart; lost our green plum this year-no clue why... Very sad:)

My favorite backyard fruit is the **Santa Rosa** Plum. This variety goes way back in time. The *Santa Rosa* was developed by Luther Burbank in 1906, which makes it a very old variety. The fruit is purplish red with a bluish film and a rich tart yellow flesh. It requires minimal chilling hours, so is well suited to the Central Valley. Harvest starts around the last week of May and the fruit hangs well into the second week of June. If you want fruit to size, you must thin aggressively; otherwise the fruit will be small and not as tasty. My Grandchildren love to eat the fruit right off the tree. They would not eat the plums if you picked them. I like the Santa Rosa because it is easy to grow and the tree will last a lifetime.