'Robusto' Plum

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'Robusto' plum (a complex diploid plum hybrid composed of Prunus salicina Lindl., P. angustifolia Marsh., P. americana Marsh., P. cerasifera J. F. Ehrh., and P. simonii Carr.) has been released to provide the southeastern United States with a cultivar which extends the early fresh and processing 'Bruce' season. 'Robusto' is similar to 'Bruce' in appearance, better in quality, and matures approximately a week later.

Origin

'Robusto' resulted from a 1967 cross of BY 4-1537 ('Queen Ann' x 'Barstow') X an un-numbered seedling ('Ozark Premier' x P. angustifolia). The seedling was selected by J. M. Thompson at Byron, Georgia in 1973. It has since been tested as BY 68-317 at experiment stations in Alabama, Arkansas, and Georgia and with grower cooperators in Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi.

Description

'Robusto' fruit from selectively thinned trees are round to round-ovate with diameters up to 48 mm. Maturity in middle Georgia occurs in early June, six days after 'Bruce' and 13 days before 'Santa Rosa'. Fruit should be picked green with a red streak on the suture since they will ripen on the shelf. The external color of fully ripe fruit is a very bright cherry red. The flesh of ripe fruit is red and clingstone. Quality is rated as good to excellent by those who prefer the taste of southern wild plums. A peach-like flavor is detectable.

'Robusto' trees are extremely vigorous (hence the name), highly branched, thinly-twigged, luxuriously leafed, and of a spreading habit. Light summer pruning is recommended to reduce the need for overly heavy winter pruning. Fruits are borne on second year and older wood. Trees at Byron have shown light leafspot and negative twig canker and fruitspot after two field inoculations of Xanthomonas pruni (E. F. Sm.) Dows. Field resistances to bacterial canker, Pseudomonas syringae van Hall, and the plum leaf scald associated with a rickettsia-like bacterium have both been satisfactory. The Byron trees were indexed free of necrotic ringspot and prune dwarf viruses.

'Robusto' flowers are self-incompatible and shed small amounts of pollen. Limited hand-pollination tests indicate good compatibility with the cultivars usually present in southeastern plum orchards.

Availability

'Robusto' is recommended for trial in any area where production of Japanese-type (diploid) plums is limited by bacteriosis. It has been propagated by several southeastern regional nurseries. Information or limited amounts of budwood may be obtained from J. M. Thompson.

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