‘Flordastar’ Peach

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‘Flordastar’ peach [Prunus persica (L.) Batsch] is released for grower trial by the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station (Fig. 1). This cultivar bears attractive, yellow-fleshed fruit that ripen before ‘Flordaprince’ in central Florida.

Origin

‘Flordastar’ originated in 1976 from a cross of ‘Flordagold’ x ‘EarliGrande’. It was selected and propagated in 1978 and has been tested as Fla. 8-1.

Description

Major advantages of ‘Flordastar’ are a low chilling requirement, early ripening, attractiveness, desirable firmness, and resistance to bacterial spots [Xanthomonas campestris pv. pruni (Sm.) Young et al.]. ‘Flordastar’ trees have an estimated winter chilling requirement of about 225 chill units (cu), less than ‘Flordagold’ (325 cu), but more than ‘Flordaprince’ (150 cu). Full bloom occurs in Gainesville, Fla. during early February, about 3 days after ‘Flordaprince’ and about 8 days before ‘Flordagold’. ‘Flordastar’ has fruited well where the coldest month averages 14 to 17°C and in colder locations in the absence of spring frosts. Best adaptation should be in areas and on sites where ‘Sunred’ nectarine has been a reliable producer. Areas south of the recommended range may experience delayed foliation and unreliable fruit set. Blossom hardness in the presence of spring frosts is good and appears to be equivalent to ‘TropicSweet’. ‘Flordastar’ trees are semi-upright, but respond to pruning, permitting the formation of an open-vase center. Trees set a moderate number of flower buds, or about the same as ‘Flordaprince’, and require moderate fruit thinning in the absence of thinning by spring frosts. Fruit are rated as medium size for the early maturity season, averaging ~5 cm diameter and 80 g in weight at firm commercial harvest. Fruit ripen about 70 to 74 days from full bloom, which is 3 days earlier than ‘Flordaprince’ in areas where both are adapted. Fruit are near-round, but have a small firm tip in areas with <200 cu. The fruit suture is smooth and pubescence is medium short. Fruit flesh is melting, but is classified as semi-cling with little separation of the flesh from the pit when soft ripe. Flesh firmness and quality are good and equal to ‘Flordaprince’. There is some red in the flesh when fruit are allowed to soften on the tree. Flesh browning does not occur readily on cut surfaces at harvest. Pits are small and have small and have less tendency than ‘Flordaking’ to split, except when the crop load is low or on 1-year-old trees, where splits are most frequent. External fruit appearance is similar to ‘Flordagold’, with 60% to 80% red blush over a yellow ground color. Harvest periods, lasting 7 to 10 days, begin in late April to early May in the Gainesville area and are 5 to 8 days earlier in central Florida. Trees of ‘Flordastar’ are vigorous and productive. Leaves are moderate in size with globose petiolar glands. Leaves and fruit are resistant to bacterial spot, similar to ‘Flordaking’. Flowers are large, showy, and medium pink. Pollen is bright yellow and abundant and trees are self-fertile.

Availability

Budwood has been released to commercial nurseries. Inquiries regarding availability of budwood can be directed to Florida Foundation Seed Producers, Inc., P.O. Box 309, Greenwood, FL 32443. Limited quantities on non-indexed budwood may be obtained from the Fruit Crops Dept., Fifield Hall, Univ. of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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Fig. 1. ‘Flordastar’, an early ripening, low-chill peach (scale in mm).