'Sunblaze' Nectarine

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'Sunblaze' nectarine, *Prunus persica* (L.) Batsch, produces an attractive, high quality, yellow-flesh fruit recommended for commercial and homeowner trial in Florida, where 'Sunred' nectarine has been grown successfully. All nectarine cultivars released by the Univ. of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station begin with the prefix "Sun". The suffix "blaze" indicates the rich, red skin pigmentation of the fruit. 'Sunblaze' is expected to replace 'Sunred' because it blossoms

sooner and ripens with 'Sunred' and bears larger, more attractive fruit with less russetting.

Origin

'Sunblaze' originated from a 1977 cross of Fla. 3-4N nectarine and Fla. 5-9 peach (Fig. 1). The low-chill requirement traces to 'Hawaiian' and 'Jewel'. It was selected in 1979 and tested as Fla. 9-15N.

Description

'Sunblaze' trees blossom and leaf with 'Sunred' and thus are rated at ≈250 chill units. Full bloom occurs most years in early to mid-February in the best area of adaptation in Florida. Trees have fruited well where the coldest month averages 15 to 17C and in

colder locations in the absence of spring frost.

Fruit of 'Sunblaze' have been observed on budded trees since 1981. The following description of fruit and tree characteristics summarizes observations for 9 fruiting years on trees 2 to 7 years old. Trees are semi-spreading and respond favorably to pruning, which permits the formation of an open center. Flower bud set is moderately heavy and trees require moderate fruit thinning in the absence of thinning by spring frosts.

Major advantages of 'Sunblaze' are increased fruit firmness and size over 'Sunred', and resistance to bacterial spot [*Xanthomonas campestris* pv. *pruni* (Smith) Dye]. Fruit are moderately large for the maturity season, averaging ≈6 cm in diameter and 100 g. Thinning to space fruit 15 to 20 cm apart is required for proper sizing. Fruit ripen ≈90 days from bloom. 'Sunblaze' ripens ≈10 to 12 days after 'Flordaprince' peach, and at the same time as 'Sunred' nectarine, for which it is a replacement. Fruit are slightly oval with no sharp tip or suture bulge, firm, ripen evenly throughout the flesh, and are semi-free with separation of the pit and flesh when soft ripe. Flesh is yellow and melting and,

Fig. 1. Pedigree of 'Sunblaze' nectarine (OP = open pollinated).

in our opinion, with good dessert quality and flavor as found in 'Sunred' nectarine. The skin is relatively free of sugar speckles, compared to 'Sunripe' nectarine. Flesh browning does not occur readily on cut or bruised surfaces. Pits are medium small and have a low tendency to split during fruit development. External fruit appearance is similar to 'Sunlite' nectarine, with 90% to 100%

deep red blush over a yellow ground color.

The harvest period, lasting 5 to 7 days, begins in mid-May in the best adapted area and is about a week later at Gainesville. Trees are vigorous and productive. Yields in the absence of frost damage are high. Leaves are medium in size with reniform petiolar glands. Leaves and fruit are resistant to bacterial spot, similar to 'Flordaking'. Flowers are non-

showy and deep pink. Pollen is bright yellow and abundant. Trees are self-fertile and precocious, fruiting with commercial crops when 2 years old (third leaf in the field).

Availability

Budwood has been released to commercial nurseries, and limited quantities of budwood may be obtained from the Fruit Crops Dept.