

# 'Queensland Earlisweet' Cherry Plum

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'Queensland Earlisweet' is an attractive, highly flavored cherry plum with small fruit that ripens 14 days before 'Wilson'. It is being introduced because of its earliness to provide a lead into the early plum Season. It is currently the earliest cherry plum with a moderate chilling requirement grown in Queensland.

## Origin

'Queensland Earlisweet' resulted from the cross of 'Early Jewel' × 'Early Gem' made in 1967 by C.W. Winks. A population of 122 seedlings was produced and initially assessed by C.W. Winks and A.M. Hibberd. 'Queensland Earlisweet' was assessed as selection GB3-91 and propagated for grower trial in 1981. We believe it to be a hybrid of *Prunus salicina* and *P. cerasifera*. Fruit were observed in grower trials from 1983 to 1988 and at the Brisbane, Australia, market from 1985 to 1988.

## Description

'Queensland Earlisweet' (Fig. 1) ripens ≈14 days before 'Wilson', 15 days before 'Methley', and 34 days before 'Santa Rosa' (Table 1). Harvest commences at Lyra (early ripening location on the Granite Belt) from 18 to 24 Nov. and at Applethorpe from 23 to 27 Nov.

The fruit are very small (28 to 38 mm), averaging 32 mm or 18 g; they are round with a full bright red (Red 46B) (Royal Horticultural Society, 1966) blush that becomes dark red (Greyed purple 187A) at full maturity. The flesh is yellow, melting, juicy, and sweet, and flavor is balanced by a slightly acid skin. The high fruit flavor has been well accepted by consumers in informal surveys. The seed is small and clingstone.

The tree is moderately productive and very vigorous, with an intermediate growth habit between upright and spreading. It has very few thorns and the leaves are small (5.8 ± 0.7 cm long, 4.0 ± 0.6 cm wide), glossy, and slightly crinkled.

Trees of 'Queensland Earlisweet' have shown good levels of field resistance to bacterial spot (*Xanthomonas campestris* pv.

*pruni*) of leaves, twigs, and fruit. It blossoms ≈10 days before 'Wilson' and is, therefore, susceptible to frost damage at some locations. At Applethorpe, first bloom averages 21 Aug. and full bloom on 30 Aug. (Table 1). Its full bloom date is later than 'Mariposa' but earlier than 'Methley', and we estimate it to have a moderate chilling requirement, intermediate between these two cultivars.

'Queensland Earlisweet' is being intro-

duced to provide a plum of high eating quality that can be marketed substantially earlier than 'Wilson', the main early cultivar, and one that has no moderate- or high-chill plum cultivars with which to compete at this early time slot. The small fruit makes it noncompetitive on the market with 'Wilson' and, therefore, 'Queensland Earlisweet' should be grown only in areas where it can be marketed before 'Wilson'.

## Availability

Limited supplies of budwood can be obtained from the Granite Belt Horticultural Research Station, P.O. Box 10, Applethorpe, Queensland 4378, Australia.

## Literature Cited

Royal Horticultural Society. 1966. Royal Horticultural Society colour chart. Royal Hort. Soc., London.

Table 1. Performance of 'Queensland Earlisweet' compared with 'Wilson', 'Methley', 'Early Jewel', and 'Santa Rosa' at Applethorpe, Australia (1984 through 1987).

Performance characteristics	Queensland Earlisweet	Wilson	Methley	Early Jewel	Santa Rosa
<b>Measurements</b>					
Ripe date*	25 Nov.	9 Dec.	10 Dec.	20 Dec.	29 Dec.
First flower	21 Aug.	31 Aug.	29 Aug.	27 Aug.	1 Sept.
Full bloom	30 Aug.	7 Sept.	7 Sept.	5 Sept.	9 Sept.
FDP <sup>†</sup> (days)	87	93	94	106	111
Average fruit wt (g)	18	37	26	41	65
Fruit size range (g)	14-34	17-60	17-52	18-55	39-97
Fruit size range (mm)	28-38	30-50	30-40	32-50	40-60
<b>Mean ratings<sup>‡</sup></b>					
Red blush	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	4.0
Attractiveness	4.5	3.0	2.5	4.0	3.8
Firmness	3.5	2.8	2.5	1.7	3.5
Flavor	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.3	3.0
Stone freedom	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Yield	3.0	3.3	5.0	4.0	2.7
Bacterial leaf spot	5.0	5.0	3.8	5.0	2.8

\*Harvest date of first eating ripe fruit.

<sup>†</sup>Fruit development period from full bloom to ripe date.

<sup>‡</sup>From 1 (least desirable) to 5 (most desirable), as judged by us.

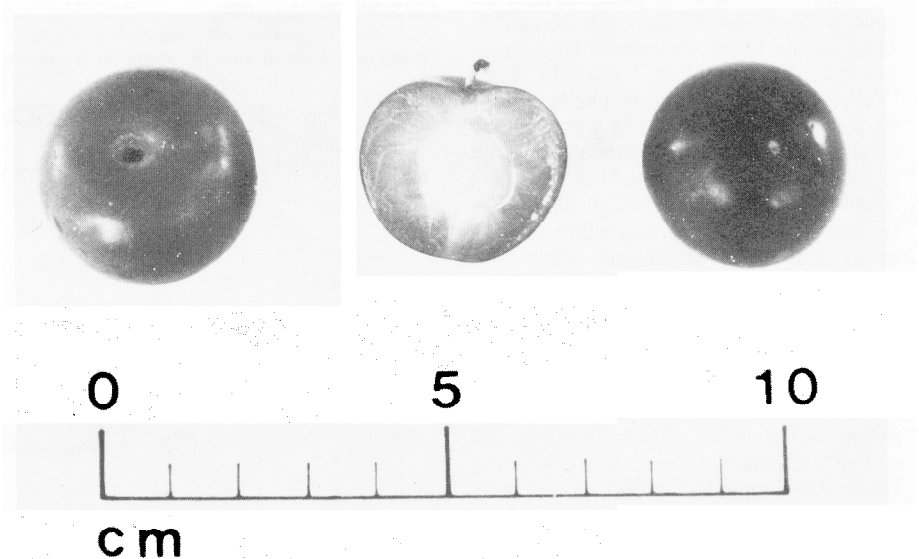


Fig. 1. 'Queensland Earlisweet' cherry plum.

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