

'NJA53' Apricot

Joseph C. Goffreda¹ and Anna Voordeckers

Department of Plant Science, Cook College, New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, Rutgers University, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, NJ 08903

Linda Butenis-Vorsa, Winfred P. Cowgill, Jr., Martha H. Maletta, and Jerome L. Frecon

Department of Agriculture and Resource Management Agents, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, Rutgers University, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, NJ 08903

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'NJA53' is an attractive, early ripening apricot (*Prunus armeniaca* L.) with high fruit quality. It is one of the earliest ripening high-quality apricot cultivars available for North America and Europe, and is being released by the New Jersey Agricultural Expt. Station (NJAES) for apricot growers specializing in quality cultivars for wholesale or roadside markets. The cultivar was patented as 'NJA53' but is being sold by commercial nurseries under the registered trademark name EarlyBlush.

Origin

'NJA53' originated from a cross between two selections from the NJAES breeding program made in 1971 by L. Fredric Hough and Catherine Bailey at the Rutgers Horticultural Research Farm, New Brunswick, N.J. (Fig. 1). The tree was first selected in 1979 at the Rutgers Fruit Research and Extension Center, Cream Ridge, N.J. Its original field location was C2-14-30. The tree was propagated on Lovell seedling rootstock and tested as NJA53 in New Jersey and southern France.

Description and performance

'NJA53' ripens ≈9 days before 'NJA54' and >2 weeks before 'Harcot'. Fruit are medium-sized, globose, and slightly compressed (Fig.2). Skin is light to medium orange with a

red blush. Flesh is orange and juicy. The fruit tend to soften quickly at the tip. We consider eating quality to be consistently good.

'NJA53' trees are vigorous and moderately spreading. 'NJA53' has moderate tolerance to bacterial spot leaf infection incited by *Xanthomonas campestris* pv. *pruni* (Smith) Young et al. The resistance level is similar to that of the cultivar Harcot but is not as high as that of 'NJA54'. Fruit infection rarely occurred on 'NJA53' under our field conditions.

The following detailed description of 'NJA53' is based on Hedrick (1925) and uses color designations in accordance with the *Royal Horticultural Colour Chart* issued by the British Colour Council in collaboration with the Royal Horticultural Society. Color also was measured in terms of its color space coordinates (L*, a*, and b*) with a chromameter (model CR-300; Minolta, Ramsey, N.J.) calibrated with a white calibration plate.

FRUIT

Shape: Globose, slightly compressed.
 Average size: Axial diameter, 4.7 cm; transverse diameter in suture plane, 4.8 cm; transverse diameter at

right angles to suture plane, 4.6 cm.

Average mass: 54 g.
 Skin color: Undercolor is Spanish orange plate 26a (L* = 62.15, a* = +12.82, b* = +45.50). Overcolor is orange-red between plates 34a and 34b (L* = 47.11, a* = +25.35, b* = +28.26).
 Pubescence: Slight.
 Suture: Shallow; extends from base to apex; slightly more pronounced at stem end.
 Base: Retuse.
 Apex: Rounded to slightly depressed; pistil point slightly depressed.
 Cavity: Elongated; average width, 1.3 cm at right angle to suture plane; average width, 2.2 cm in suture plane; average length, 2.6 cm.
 Maturity: Ripened ≈2 weeks before 'Harcot' in Cream Ridge, N.J.
 Use: Early maturing, good quality, dessert apricot.

FLESH

Thickness: Medium.
 Color: Orange plate 24b.
 Texture: Melting.
 Firmness: Moderately firm, softens at apex.
 Eating quality: Very good.

STONE

Type: Freestone.
 Shape: Ovid.
 Size: Small to medium; average length, 2.4 cm; average width, 2.1 cm.
 Ridges: Slight ridges extending along both sides of the suture plane.
 Tendency to split: None.
 Surface: Irregular, slightly pitted.
 Color: Golden buff to golden brown plate 164a to 164b (L* = 52.82, a* = +10.41, b* = +31.37).

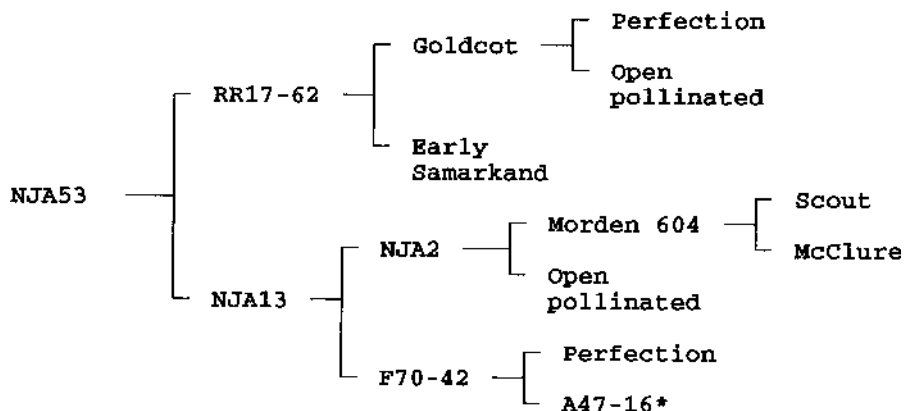


Fig. 1. Pedigree of 'NJA53' apricot. * = Selection from the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Fresno, Calif.; A47-16 = Perfection x (Royal x Blush).

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¹To whom reprint requests should be addressed.

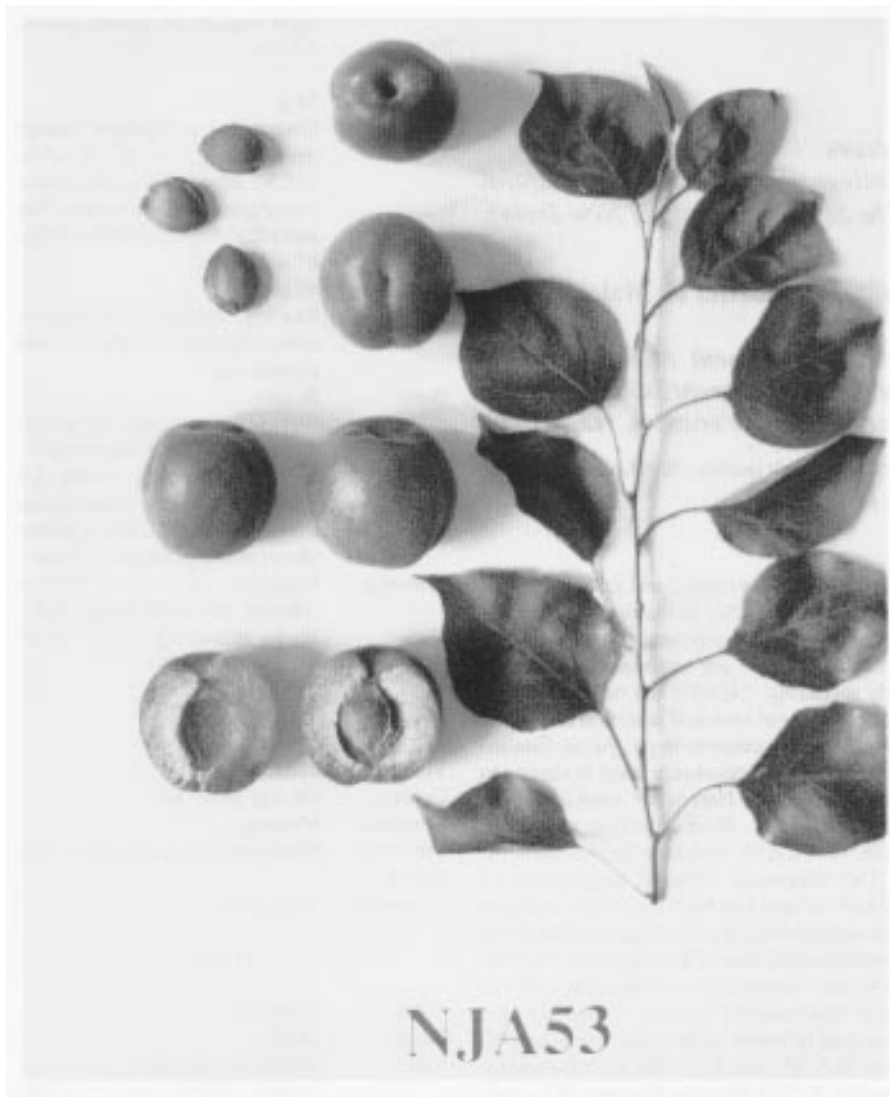


Fig. 2. Leaves, fruit, and stone morphology of 'NJA53' apricot.

TREE

Size: Large.
 Vigor: Vigorous.
 Growth: Moderately spreading.
 Production: Productive.
 Bearer: Regular.

LEAVES

Average size: Length, 8.7 cm; width, 6.8 cm.
 Form: Ovate, abruptly acuminate, obtuse at base.
 Thickness: Medium.
 Margin: Serrate.
 Color: Adaxial surface is green plate 137a ($L^* = 38.07$, $a^* = -12.01$, $b^* = +18.64$). Abaxial surface is yellow-green plate 147b ($L^* = 44.82$, $a^* = -12.40$, $b^* = +18.01$).
 Petiole: Average length, 3.3 cm; average thickness, 0.15 cm.
 Glands: Form, globose; average number, 3.3; variable in number (zero to five); primarily found on petiole.

Availability

Limited quantities of nonindexed budwood are available for testing purposes only from the Rutgers Fruit Research and Extension Center, 283 Route 539, Cream Ridge, NJ 08514. Rutgers, The State Univ. of New Jersey, has applied for a plant patent on this cultivar. 'NJA53' trees are sold by licensed commercial nurseries under the registered trademark name EarlyBlush. Nurseries desiring a propagation license should write J.C.G.

Literature Cited

Hedrick, U.P. 1925. Systematic pomology. 1st ed. Macmillan, New York.