



# *the Urban Scion Post*

a publication of the Seattle Tree Fruit Society,  
a chapter of the Western Cascade Fruit Society

# President's Letter

A few months ago, I discussed our plans to adapt to the COVID world in which we now reside. Here are a few updates:

- The Seattle Parks & Recreation Department hopes to open some of their facilities as soon as they are allowed, with additional constraints in place. What this means is that some of their larger spaces, such as Hangar 30, will be made available for meetings, thus allowing for plenty of room for “distancing.” We do not know whether this option will work for our club at the present time, as our events thrive on the camaraderie that ensues when we meet. But it might be a consideration down the road.
- We are planning an orchard work party on November 14th (our normal meeting date) from 10:00 am to early afternoon. This will be a COVID-conscious, low-key event that will also include a plant exchange. November, as you know, is an excellent time to plant. There will be a stock of Blueberries, Lingonberries, Gooseberries, Hardy Kiwis, Raspberries, Blackberries and other plants for sale or trade. Feel free to bring whatever you would like to trade, sell, or share (including tools and books). It will provide a great opportunity for people to catch up with each other, while abiding by public safety protocols.
- We are experimenting with using ZOOM technology for upcoming meetings. Board member Rick Schulz is spearheading this effort. We will test this out at a Board meeting first. Then, hopefully, we can use this for future meetings and presentations.
- Going into 2021, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may continue for some time to cause hardship to both public health and personal finances. STFS board members have agreed that for STFS memberships expiring during calendar year 2021, STFS members will individually determine how much they want to pay for their 2021-2022 annual membership dues. Donations are also appreciated but not expected. Maintaining a roster of knowledgeable, long-time members is paramount and trumps short-term finances. Please pay only what you feel you can.
- We plan to offer bare-root strawberry (and other species) plants to our membership next spring. More details will be forthcoming.
- We could really use some additional help in maintaining our demonstration orchard. We’ve sort of “limped along” this season, due to the unique challenges we confronted over most of the year. Nonetheless, we did a decent job of controlling weeds, and we successfully netted trees, thinned and bagged fruit, harvested them, and maintained an orderly appearance to the orchard. However, we would like to do more. We would like to harvest fruit on a timelier basis, add additional varieties and species, and add educational signage. Please consider becoming involved in these efforts.

All chapters of the Western Cascade Fruit Society are managing to maintain momentum, to some degree or another, during this pandemic. A few are struggling but are hanging on. Unfortunately, one well- respected organization, the Home Orchard Society, will be ending its 45-year existence at the end of this year. This organization, which has had as many as 800 members nationally, was so important to the success of our local clubs, through their propagation fairs, scion-wood exchange, and expertise. I will miss this organization. But I’m glad they were around to support all of us and boost our interest to a higher level. Thanks to all who supported this group. Let’s continue to support each other.

*Regards, Mike Ewanciw*

## Urban Scion Post

### Inside this issue:

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President's Letter	2
Covid November 2020	3
The Chestnut Pandemic	4-6
New Chestnut Cultivars	<b>7-9</b>
Storing Kiwi Fruit	10
The Medeival Medlar	11-12
Fruitful Kitchen	13
About Seattle Tree Fruit Society	14

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Officers, Directors & Member-	14
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On the cover

*Chestnuts foraged on Vashon Island  
Photo: Laure Jansen*

# A Covid November 2020

by Marilyn Tilbury

As this is written at the beginning of November, the sun is out, the wind is from the north and it's a beautiful day (though the sun will seem to be setting way too soon). Last month offered us backyard growers good weather with the bonus of yet another year of great fall color. Many of us were still mowing the lawn on the last day of October.

But when you read this, the weather may be very different. A La Niña winter is out there somewhere, and you've probably noticed the trend that weather systems tend to persist in being wet or dry longer before switching back.

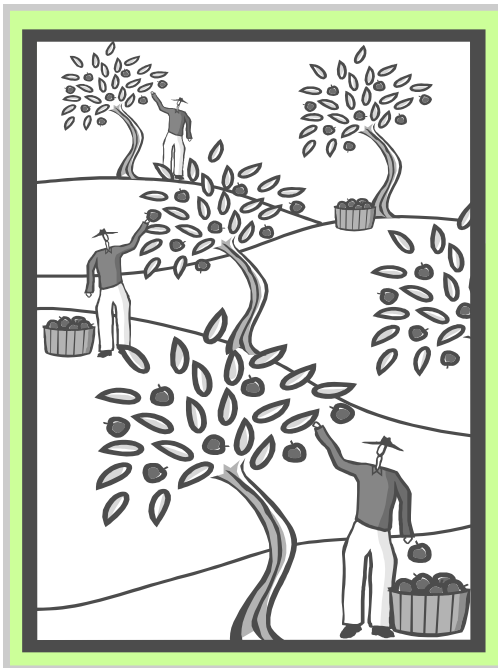
This month gives us the best opportunity of the year for transplanting. Most anything from perennials to dwarf fruit trees to big rhodys can be installed or moved. There are two requirements for success: the air temperature must be above freezing when roots are exposed, and the new hole must be dug before the transplantee is moved.

Don't dig the new hole any deeper than the plant's root system but do make the hole wider so the new roots developing over the winter will find it easy to spread out laterally. Add no compost or fertilizer to the backfill but if this is a fruit tree, adding a handful of dolomite lime is good. People wonder why not to improve the backfill but think about it: if the soil in the hole is much better than the surrounding material, why leave? It's best for plant roots to fan out as far as possible in their new location.

Thinking about planting something new? Maybe a loquat, persimmon or a hardy yuzu citrus? We are blessed with excellent local nurseries and they all have tempting websites. Burnt Ridge Nursery and Cloud Mountain Farm Center offer prepaid order pickup now at their farm gate as does One Green World Nursery with its unique edible plants in Oregon. Raintree Nursery will start shipping in

January 25, 2021. It's probably best to phone a nursery for direct human contact should you wish to order and pickup.

This month is also the best time to apply finished compost. A 2" thick layer applied directly to the soil surface does the trick, no need to mix it in. If you could do that each year, your plants would really thank you. These short, dark days are also the time to check that any mulch, woodchips or just invasive grass is a foot away from tree trunks. Voles love to girdle stems at the soil line if the trunk area is obscured.



Were you able to get a cover crop planted last month? If the soil temperature is above 50° F, it's still possible to get some of the hardier covers like Austrian field peas or fava beans planted. Squirrels and crows may harvest the new seedlings when they emerge but you can frustrate them by laying down 2" chicken wire until the roots are developed enough to resist the tug of these sharecroppers.

WSDA is happy. On October 24 they were able to tie a tiny radio tag onto a live trapped Asian giant hornet (using dental floss) and follow it home. The nest location was a shock—8 feet up in an old alder snag. Literature had informed them that this species was a ground nester. After emptying a canister of CO<sub>2</sub> into the entrance, they vacuumed 85 hornets from the nest. They returned on October 28 to cut down the tree and examine the nest where larvae, 2 queens and the chewed off radio tag were found. You may watch their video of this adventure by going to [agr.wa.gov/hornets](http://agr.wa.gov/hornets).

They assume there's at least one more nest out there, and they want to find it before new queens disperse for next year's AGH crop. We wish them good luck.

Please stay safe this month, masked and socially distanced. Covid 19 seems to be everywhere now and Thanksgiving looms. We want to be able to see *all* of you when it is safe to do so.



Jenny



Emalyn's Purple



Nanjin Special

# Surviving the Chestnut Pandemic of the Early 20th Century

by Laure Jansen

Photos: J. Michael Nave



Kyoung



Hong Kong



Yixian  
Large



YGF



Ness



Patterson

In the early part of the 20th century, a pandemic of chestnut plague swept through the eastern US and southern Europe. The chestnut blight has been called the greatest ecological disaster to strike the world's forests in all of history.

Nurserymen and collectors, including Luther Burbank, began to import Asian chestnut species in the 1870s. By the turn of the 20th century, the Asian species were offered for sale in numerous nursery catalogs. *Cryphonectria parasitica*, the agent of chestnut blight, is a parasitic fungus is naturally found in South East Asia, so Chinese and Japanese chestnut species have acquired immunity. The importation of these species was to have a catastrophic effect on the native chestnut forests of the eastern US.

The discovery of chestnut blight in the Bronx Zoo was described as follows: "...a few scattered cases which occurred [on American chestnut trees] during the summer of 1904. Early last June [1905] this disease was noticed on so many widely scattered trees of all sizes that specimen branches and an appeal for information were sent to the USDA". The pandemic spread rapidly throughout the native chestnut populations, devastating hundreds of thousand of acres of chestnut and oak trees.

This disease reduced the American chestnut (*C. dentata*) from its position as the dominant tree species in the eastern forest ecosystem to little more than an early-succession-stage shrub. There has been essentially no chestnut lumber sold in the U.S. for decades, and the bulk of the annual 20-million-pound nut crop now comes from introduced chestnut species or imported nuts.

The American Chestnut foundation is now dedicated to growing resistant cultivars of *C. dentata*, and to replanting and re-establishing the eastern chestnut forests. Although the remaining chestnuts of the eastern US still suffer from this blight, American and European chestnuts grow well in the Pacific NW. There is not enough humidity in the summer for the chestnut blight to proliferate here. Most commercial chestnut growers on the Pacific coast produce the "Colossal" hybrid cultivar for its early bearing and large nut size. In the Pacific NW, a small chestnut is 1 inch or less; medium is between 1 inch and 1.25 inches; large chestnuts are bigger than 1.25 inches. Most of the hybrids produce nuts larger than 1 1/8 inch. One of the largest nuts is produced by "Okie", a *C. chinquapin* x *crenata* hybrid. But this cultivar prefers daytime temperatures above 80 degrees during the growing season, so it is not the best choice for our area.

Many chestnut trees grown in North America now are either European (*C. sativa*), or hybrid *C. sativa* x *crenata*, or Chinese (*C. mollissima*). Hybrids are developed from European chestnut genetics to produce large-sized nuts, and from Japanese or Chinese chestnuts to confer blight resistance. Examples of European x Japanese hybrid cultivars are: "Colossal", "Bouche de Betizac", "Precoce Migoule", and "Labor Day".

## American Chestnuts

The American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*), originally populated forestland from Maine and southern Ontario to Mississippi, and from the Atlantic coast to the Appalachian mountains and the Ohio valley. Although few of these originally tree remain in the wake of the chestnut blight, there are still hundreds of large (2 to 5 ft diameter) outside its historical range, some in areas where less virulent strains of the pathogen are more common, such as a specific population of 600 to 800 large trees in Northern Michigan

The American species can be distinguished from Asian species by its larger and more widely spaced saw-teeth on the edges of its leaves, as indicated by the scientific name *dentata*, Latin for "toothed". It is prolific bearer of [nuts](#), usually with three nuts enclosed in each spiny, green bur, ripening and falling near the first frost.

The **Allegheny chinquapin** (*Castanea pumila*), also known as dwarf chestnut, is closely related to the American chestnut and both trees can be found in the same habitat, mixed with oak and hickory trees. Allegheny chinquapin can be distinguished by its smaller single nut (half the size of a chestnut) that is not flattened (chestnuts are flattened on one side). The leaves of the

Allegheny chinquapin are smaller than the American chestnut and have less distinct teeth. Allegheny chinquapin, however, is less susceptible to the chestnut blight fungus that devastated the American chestnut. While the chinquapin does blight to some degree, it continues to send out suckers that will produce fruit.

## European Chestnuts

The **sweet chestnut**, or **Spanish chestnut** (*Castanea sativa*) can be distinguished from the horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), to which it is only distantly related. The horse chestnut fruits (conkers) look similar to sweet chestnuts, in a similar seed case, but are not palatable to humans. Sweet trees live to an age of 500 to 600 years.<sup>[4]</sup> In cultivation they may even grow as old as 1000 years or more.

In Southern Europe as well as in North America, *Cryphonectria parasitica* destroyed much of the chestnut population. Fortunately the sweet chestnut has great genetic diversity and populations are recovering from the chestnut blight. Different cultivars are exploited for uses such as flour, boiling, roasting, drying, sweets or wood. The sweet chestnut is naturally self incompatible, meaning that the plant cannot pollinate itself, so cross-pollination is necessary (thus the genetic diversity). Some selected varieties are smaller trees, more compact in growth, and bearing nuts earlier in life with different ripening time: the Marigoule, the Marisol and the Maraval in particular. Some cultivars only produce one large seed per cupule, while others produce up to three seeds.

## Asian Chestnuts

*Castanea crenata*, known as **Korean chestnut**, **Korean castanea**, and **Japanese chestnut**, is a species of chestnut native to Japan and Korea. *Castanea crenata* is a small to medium-sized tree growing to 10–15 m tall. The leaves are similar to those of the sweet chestnut, though usually a little smaller. The spiny cupulus contain 3–7 brownish nuts that are shed during October.

It is an important tree in Japan for its heavy production of sweet, edible nuts. A number of cultivars have been selected for large nut size. It is also widely cultivated in eastern China and Taiwan. It is resistant to chestnut blight, and is of importance in North America in the development of disease-resistant hybrids.

*C. mollissima* known as the **Chinese chestnut**, is a species of chestnut native to China, Taiwan, and Korea. Naturally an understory tree, Chinese chestnut has been cultivated in East Asia for millennia. The species prefers full sun and acidic, loamy soil, and has a medium growth rate. Chinese

chestnuts grow to about 20 meters tall, with a broad crown. The fruit is a densely spiny cupule containing two or three glossy brown nuts; these are about 1.5 inches in diameter on wild trees, with some larger on developed cultivars.

This is one of the species resistant to *Cryphonectria parasitica* and so is also used in the development of disease-resistant hybrids. When cultivated close to other species of chestnut (including Japanese chestnut, *C. crenata*; American chestnut, *C. dentata*; and sweet chestnut, *C. sativa*), Chinese chestnut readily cross-pollinates with them to form natural hybrids.

## NURSERIES THAT OFFER CHESTNUTS

Burnt Ridge Nursery 432 Burnt Ridge Road, Onalaska, WA 98570 (360) 985-2873•

Empire Chestnut Company 3276 Empire Rd SW, Carrollton, OH 44615 (330) 627-3181•

Forrest Keeling Nursery 88 Forrest Keeling Lane, Elsberry, MO 63343 (573) 898-5571•

Rolling River Nursery PO Box 332, Orleans, CA 95556 (530) 627-3120•

Washington Chestnut Company 6160 Everson Goshen Rd., Everson, WA 98247 (360) 966-7158

### Sources and Resources:

“Chestnuts and the Introduction of Chestnut Blight” PP008 (11/97). By Dr. Sandra L. Anagnostakis. Department of Plant Pathology and Ecology. The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

“Review of Recent New Chestnut Cultivars” by J. Michael Nave. 2017. <http://www.chestnutgrowers.org/MikeNave-NewCultivars.pdf>

American Chestnut Foundation. [www.acf.org](http://www.acf.org)

“Chestnut Growers – Breeding and Growing”. An online guide from Penn State, which includes sections on pollinations, grafting, biocontrol (mudpacking), and other topics: [ecosystems.psu.edu/research/chestnut/breeding](http://ecosystems.psu.edu/research/chestnut/breeding)

## J. MICHAEL NAVE'S REVIEW: RECENT NEW CHESTNUT CULTIVARS

### ***Castanea mollissima***

1."Jenny"—an open pollinated seedling of the old Ohio cultivar Kintzel. Kintzel is discussed in a 1962 NNGA Nutshell article. Like Kintzel, Jenny is a vigorous tall tree with a very erect growth pattern and unusually large leaves. It does not have the orchard type growth pattern common in many Chinese chestnut trees. The nuts are large and very flavorful -one of our favorite eating nuts. Despite their size, the nuts drop early in the season. Additionally, all nuts drop within a very short period of time once the first nuts start dropping.

2."Emalyn's Purple"—Nuts are huge and pubescent with an appearance that is very similar to "Jenny". Nuts drop mid -season. Nuts have good flavor with a nice level of sweetness. From left to right, 28 grams, 33 grams and 26 grams or 15.6 nuts per lb.

3."Nanjing Special"- Nuts drop early continuing into mid-season. Superb flavor, one of the best tasting Chinese chestnuts I've eaten in the US. Only mildly sweet but with a complexity of flavor that is very rare. The tree is an erect grower. The nut color is dull brown and fades quickly and unevenly, so it is not a pretty nut after a few days of storage.

4.Kyoung— a sport from the Chinese variety Bess. Bess is not a very productive tree and produces irregularly shaped nuts of variable size. Kyoung on the other hand has regularly shaped nuts with consistent large size. Kyoung nuts also have better flavor. When grafted, Kyoung produces a vigorous and somewhat erect growing tree.

5.Hong Kong—The best seedling grown out from a group of nuts from Hong Kong. The nuts peel well and nut flavor is very good with nice sweetness. A favorite of Dr. Ken Hunt when he worked with chestnuts at the University of Missouri. Grafted trees at the University of Missouri show vigorous growth and good productivity of medium to large nuts with no signs of blight. Nut fall is mid-season. Nuts from the original tree are consistently large (~20-22 per lb).

6.Yixian Large—Produces a very large nut (13-16 per lb) with good flavor. This tree is from a grow-out of large nuts from Yixian, China, in the southern tip of Anhui Province. A grafted tree at the University of Missouri chestnut orchard in New Franklin produced the second largest nuts growing there in 2009. The only tree that produced larger nuts at New Franklin that year was Maraval, a Crenata x Sativa hybrid that produces notoriously large nuts. Yixian Large had 25.5 grams mean nut weight (18 per lb), versus Maraval which had 26.2 grams (17 per lb), Bouche de Betizac (22.8 grams), Marsol (22.6 grams), Marigoule (20.8 grams), Luvall's Monster (19.4 grams), Peach (18.1 grams), and Colossal (15.2 grams).

7.YGF—(Yixian Good Flavor) Produces a very flavorful, medium -large sized nut. The nuts drop over an extended period of time, from early in the season to late in the season. The tree is an erect grower. This tree originated from a grow-out of nuts from the chestnut growing region of Yixian, China, in the southern tip of Anhui Province. YGF has produced some of the larger Chinese nuts grown at the University of Missouri chestnut planting in New Franklin.

8.Ness—Large nuts with excellent flavor. Tree is small and spreading.

9.Payne (Byron 3-3)— was a tree growing in the old orchard at the Southeastern Fruit and Tree Nut Research Laboratory in Byron, Georgia. That orchard was pushed over in May 2014, but Payne can still be found in various nurseries and test plots. Payne produced the largest chestnuts of almost 300 chestnut trees at Byron. The nuts are very large (~18 per lb) and have good flavor. So far, grafted trees have not reproduced the size of the nuts on the original tree. The nuts drop mid-late season, the 4th week of September in Georgia. The tree is named for entomologist Dr. Jerry Payne who worked at the Byron research station for

many years before retiring. He is responsible for the release of the gall wasp predators that eventually curbed the gall wasp infestations in Georgia and Alabama

**“Patterson”**—medium to large nuts, very sweet, on a spreading orchard type tree that is nonetheless very vigorous. Tree has interesting fat leaves.

### ***Castanea sativa/mollisima***

**“Yolo Grande”** (aka “Serr”)-Yolo Grande is a tree discovered by University of California Professor Eugene Serr. Dr. Serr was internationally known for his work with walnuts. He and Dr. Harold Forde led the walnut breeding program at the University of California for more than 20 years before Dr. Serr passed away in 1968. It is unknown where he found this chestnut tree, which he labeled as *Castanea mollisima*. He traveled throughout the US, as well as to Europe, Turkey, China and elsewhere, to meet with other nut crop researchers, so he might have found this tree almost anywhere. Despite his identification of the tree as *C. mollisima*, it appears to be a *mollisima/sativa* hybrid. The tree looks European. The nuts look like traditional European marronis, with visible striping as they age, but the nuts are denser than the average European nut as well as being much sweeter. The location of Serr’s original tree is unknown. The old U. C. Davis chestnut orchard had a mature graft of Serr’s tree until that orchard was pushed over in 2015. A few private collectors have kept this variety alive. The Davis tree was very productive and had very large nuts, in the range of 18-22 per lb. When cooked as a Chinese nut, the nuts have superb texture and flavor. It is unknown whether the tree has any blight resistance. The tree flowers later than Chinese trees and earlier than European trees. Nut drop is also in between Chinese and European trees

### **Complex hybrid**

**“Szego”**—Szego is a very complex hybrid, a seedling of the California hybrid Linden, which is predominantly *Crenata/Pumila*. The pollen parent of Szego may be the Dunstan hybrid chestnut, Revival. Szego is a very vigorous and erect tree. It grafts well on Chinese trees, Chinese hybrids, Japanese hybrids and European hybrids. It is a heavy pollen producer. Nuts are uniformly large (12-16 per lb), but easy peeling and fairly dense, much like a Chinese nut. Nuts are sweet and flavorful, generally with more flavor than pure Chinese nuts. The nuts drop mid season (2-3 weeks after Colossal) and store very well. The tree is resistant to phytophthora root rot. It does have some blight resistance but the extent is not yet known. It has been growing for more than nine years in many blighted areas without noticeable signs of blight. The tree is named after New York NNGA member Al Szego, who worked with many types of hybrid chestnuts before passing away in 1991. Mr. Szego was known for his generosity in providing others with nuts, scion wood and advice.

### ***Castanea sativa***

**“Boitano”** (aka “Fife”) — a pure European chestnut tree planted in Washington state by Italian-American Angelo Boitano. I found the nuts being sold at the Pike Place Market in Seattle years ago. Eventually some chestnut enthusiasts headed by Harvey Correia tracked down the owner of the original tree which is located in Fife, Washington. The nuts are very large (15-18 per lb), very dark -almost black, peel very well, and have very good flavor. The nuts mature in Fife, WA in mid October. The tree does not produce pollen. Although the nuts are very high quality we have yet to see any grafted trees reproduce the size of the original nuts.

### ***Castanea sativa/crenata***

**“Gillet”**-*Castanea sativa x crenata*. Probably a seedling of the cultivar “Nevada” (which is possibly a seedling of the old French cultivar Comballe), Gillet was planted by Bob Bergantz in a small orchard in the Sierra Nevada foothills. This compact orchard type tree produces pollen and large crops of huge single embryo nuts (10-12 per lb) that peel easily. The nuts drop mid-season (3 weeks after Colossal). They store very well. The nuts drop free from relatively compact burs. The nuts have a basic European chestnut flavor that sweetens

with storage. The tree grafts well on almost anything and is extremely vigorous. Seedlings have been very vigorous also. It has survived -27F in Michigan with no damage. It is named after Felix Gillet, the 19th century French born nurseryman who started the Barren Hill Nursery in 1869 in Nevada City, California.

**“Bergantz”**- This is another tree planted by Bob Bergantz in the Sierra Nevada foothills that may also be a seedling of the cultivar "Nevada". This tall tree produces very large nuts (12-14 per lb) that peel easily and have very good flavor. The nuts fall mid-season (2 weeks after Colossal). The tree does not produce pollen. The tree is named after Bob Bergantz, who resided in Oregon and Placerville, California in his later years, before passing away in 2001. Mr. Bergantz popularized the Colossal, Nevada, Linden, and Silverleaf cultivars. He planted hundreds of chestnut trees in California and Oregon and provided hundreds of trees and seed nuts to others.

### **Other interesting new cultivars of *C. mollisima*:**

**YuYu** -seedling of Chinese cultivar Yu

**Yixian Orange** -seedling grown out from nuts from Yixian, China

**Burnt Umber** -seedling of Chinese cultivar Duanza

**Liddington seedling** –second generation Sleeping Giant seedling

**Brown Sugar** –seedling of Dunstan Revival. Very vigorous. Pollen parent was probably Qing.

**Shing** -seedling grown out from nuts from Yixian, China. Very vigorous tree. May be a sibling of Yixian

**Large.Liu Liu Dwarf #1** -seedling of "Jiandingyouli" (Sharp top oily)

**Liu Liu Dwarf #2** -Probable seedling of "Jiujiazhong" (Nine families)

**Red ABC** -seedling of Nanjing Botanical Garden's "Honglizi" (Red chestnut). Very vigorous tree.

### **Some other interesting trees of Byron, Georgia:**

USDA Southeastern Fruit and Tree Nut Research Laboratory -*Castanea mollisima* trees: Older orchard - pushed over May 2014 (Rows are numbered north to south. Individual trees are numbered west to east)

**Kintzel** (Byron 1-1 and 1-2)

**Schuncke** (Byron 1-7) –very sweet nuts

**Rose** -(Byron 1-20) –smaller tree with high quality nuts

**Big Red** (Byron 3-18) –large, red, somewhat flattened, nuts with good flavor

**Shandong** (Byron 4-2) –huge nuts with good flavor

**Jiangsu** (Byron 4-4) Jinling (Byron 4-18) –seedling of Nanking with better nuts

### **Underutilized or little known older cultivars/Complex hybrids:**

**Luvall's Monster** -(*C. crenata* x *C. dentata*) x *C. mollisima*—tree with large nuts grown by the late Verne Luvall in Galesburg, Illinois.

**Linden** –A predominantly *C. crenata* x *C. pumila* hybrid growing in an orchard in Linden, California. The female parent of Szego.

**Burbank Stump Sprout** –Was one of the few remaining trees bred by Luther Burbank. This tree was growing in a senior citizens community next to the old Luther Burbank Gold Ridge Farm in Sebastopol, California but has now been cut down. There are perhaps a dozen other remaining Burbank trees in this same area but this tree had the best quality nuts. I still have small grafts of it.

**Kintzel** (Byron 1-1 and Byron 1-2) –*C. mollisima*. Tree discovered by NNGA member Frank Kintzel of Cincinnati, OH.W.C. –Named for W. C. Donoho of Louisville, KY, a member of the Kentucky Nut Growers Association. Large dark nuts that are sweet and store well. Tree may be a sibling to Qing. Nuts look very similar to Qing, have similar size and similar sweetness –may even be sweeter. Tree is more vigorous than Qing and may graft more easily.

**Bisalta#2** –*C. sativa* x *C. crenata*. An Italian cultivar rarely grown in the US, better than the more common Bisalta #3.



# How to Store Kiwi Fruit

by Hildegard Hendrickson

*Editor's note: this article was submitted by Hildegard in 2002 and is here reprinted).*

Over the years, I have had many questions asking me how to store kiwis, as well as statements from home orchardists that they ripped out their “fuzzy” kiwis because they never ripened.

Since I have successfully grown kiwis (I grow 5 varieties) and am eating my May “fuzzy” kiwis (*Actinidia deliciosa*, var. *Hayward*) in May and June, I will share how I do it.

“Fuzzy” kiwis DO NOT RIPEN ON THE VINE (like pears). When I harvest “fuzzy” kiwis, usually in late November, after there was a light frost or two, they are “stone” hard. In 2010 harvested them on a very cold Saturday, November 20th, because the weather forecast accurately predicted temperatures in the 20's for the following Monday and Tuesday. After having shared my harvest with family and friends, I put every “fuzzy” kiwi separately in a foldable (NOT ziplock) sandwich bag, lay them two layers deep in a cardboard box (separating the layers with newspapers) and store them in a well ventilated carport. This December and January, I had to bring the boxes twice into my garage, because we twice had Arctic Blasts that produced below freezing temperatures, especially during the night. After the freezing temperatures are over, they again go out into the carport. In this cool storage they last till May/June the following year. If we have an early, warm spring, the “fuzzy” kiwis soften sooner, and then I dehydrate them – they taste great.

Usually, I bring eight to 10 “fuzzy” kiwis at a time, into the house and lay them on the kitchen counter. After several days or a week or two, they soften and you can eat them. The “fuzzy” kiwis in the store usually are hard and you need to wait for them to soften before you can use them. To speed up the softening, put a few “fuzzy” kiwis into a small brown paper bag and add a couple of apples, and the kiwis soften faster. I have never stored “fuzzy” kiwis in the refrigerator (In the store they are not stored in cooled bins either).

“Hardy” kiwis (*Actinidia argutas* and *A. melenandras*,) DO RIPEN ON THE VINE, usually in early October. The “hardest” kiwis (Arctic Beauty: *A. kolomikta*) ripen in August/September. These kiwis, if stored in the refrigerator, will keep for about a month. Since this is a busy time in the orchard, some people freeze “hardy kiwis” and later make jam or smoothies.

I have waited till the “hardy kiwis” were soft to the touch before I harvested them. But this fall I have been told that they can be picked sooner (when they are not fully soft to the touch) and they will last longer in the refrigerator.

ADVICE when harvesting “hardy kiwis”: Use “snippers” (pruners, shears, etc) and cut the stem. If you pull off the “hardy kiwis”, a piece of the skin comes off, and the kiwis will not store well.

Kiwis are not tropical plants. They do well in the Pacific Northwest. Very young plants may need protection from arctic blasts. You need a male and a female kiwi plant to produce fruit. Kiwis are vines and need sturdy support.



Photo: Andrew Dunn



The  
Medieval  
Medlar  
by Laure Jansen



Photo: Wikipedia Commons



Medlars (*Mespilus germanica*) are commonly thought of as a medieval European fruit, and even the botanical name, *Mespilus germanicus*, expresses that idea. In fact, the medlar is native to Asia Minor, northern Iran, Azerbaijan and parts of the Caucasus. Wild medlars are found in parts of the Balkan peninsula, including Serbia, Albania and Macedonia, and are highly sought after by local foragers. The medlar has been cultivated since Greek and Roman times, and has been grown by commercial and home growers for centuries in Turkey.

In the Gilan province of Northern Iran, medlars are a winter delicacy. Unripe medlars are stored in lightly-salted water and stored, covered, on a cool location where they ripen slowly over a period of several months. Bletted medlars are also boiled with water and sugar to make a spice paste, similar to a quince paste. There is actually a medlar paste festival in the town of Astara on the Iranian-Azerbaijan border. Medlar paste is used to make a local dish, “Lavangi”: roast chicken stuffed with crushed walnut, medlar, pomegranate molasses, barberries and caramelized onions.

The hardy medlar grows well in the Pacific NW, and their tidy, rounded shape, with broad, shiny, deciduous leaves, makes a nice addition to an edible landscape. They are ripe in November when other fruit is mostly finished.

Medlars thrive in a climate with warm summers and mild winters, and enjoy a moderately acid soil. Add peat moss or organic material to heavy clay soils prior to planting. The medlar prefers a moist soil, and so will tolerate a soggy spot better than most other fruit trees. However, they do prefer a sunny and protected location, and will fruit better and provide greater fall color if they are in full sun.

You can graft your own medlar onto apple, pear, hawthorn or quince rootstock. The medlar is more or less compatible with all of these. If you want a very dwarf tree, try a dwarf apple rootstock; for a moderate tree, the medlar grows well on Quince A or Quince BA29C. You can even try a “fruit cocktail” tree by growing quince, apple and medlar on the same tree. But the medlar tree itself is so pretty that you will enjoy it for its own sake. Note that the Nottingham cultivar is a naturally dwarfish variety. Medlars are self-pollination, so only one cultivar is needed.

In our rainy climate, consider planting an “Iranian” medlar, which is closer in type to the wild medlars of the Transcaucasus. It has a relatively closed eye, which means it does not crack and rot as some other varieties.

## Some Unusual Cultivars

“**Puciu Mol**”. Italy. An old cultivar from Piedmont, Italy. Fruit is 1.5 inches in diameter. Good for sauces and preserves. Ripe in late October. (source: [treepeony.com](http://treepeony.com) – Cricket Hill Garden)

“**Iranian**”. A dessert variety from the Alborz Mountains in northern Iran. Smallish fruit with closed eye, providing some protection from rotting.

“**Sultan**”. A large-fruited medlar, up to 2 inches, from the Netherlands. (Same as Monstreuse d’Evreinoff)

“**Marron**”. Ripe mid to late October.

“**Karadagskaya**”. Very productive Ukrainian cultivar. Dark brown, 1.5 inch fruit.

“**Skra Selection No. 2**”. Georgia. Similar to wild.

“**Comune**” – Italy. Heavy Bearer. Ripe early November. Moderately vigorous.

“**Goccia**” – Italy. Moderate bearer. Ripe early November. Moderately vigorous.

“**Gigante**”. Italy. Low production. Ripe late October. Not very vigorous tree.

“**Precocce**”— Italy. Moderate bearer. Ripe late October. Vigorous tree.

“**Stoneless**” – England

“**Persian Azgil**. Iran”. Genetically same as “Royal”. Medium sized fruit, good flavor, heavy cropper.

### Sources and Resources:

“Medieval Medlars: Get to Know and Grow this Unusual Fruit”. Stella Otto. Jan 6, 2016. [www.northcoastgardening.com](http://www.northcoastgardening.com)

“Ugly, But Tasty, Old Fruit” by Lee A. Reich [leereich.com](http://leereich.com)

“Genetic Diversity of Medlar (*Mespilus germanicus*) Germplasm using Microsatellite Markers”. Schaefer, A. Nyberg, J. Postman, N. Bassil. OSU, Corvallis, OR.

“Shakespeare's Medlars” from [ars-grin.gov](http://ars-grin.gov)

## from the Fruitful Kitchen:

### Pear Cranberry Crumble Bars

Contributed by Tracey Bernal

I just had to make this, now that organic cranberries and local pears are in the stores, not to mention that I seem to have collected a huge stash of almond flour that I need to use up. The oats might even make it seem like a good breakfast option.

This is adapted from a recipe by Yossi Arefi at New York Times Cooking. Her book *Sweeter Off the Vine: Fruit Desserts for Every Season*, is a favorite in my collection.

#### For the filling:

- 1 pound/454 grams Comice or Anjou pears (2 large), ripe but firm
- 2 cups/200 grams fresh cranberries
- ½ cup/101 grams granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon finely grated orange zest
- ½ teaspoon finely grated fresh ginger

#### For the crust and crumble:

- 2 cups/256 grams all-purpose flour
- 1 cup/220 grams light brown sugar, packed
- 1 cup/112 grams almond flour
- 1 cup/99 grams rolled oats
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup/227 grams unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- ½ teaspoon almond extract

Heat oven to 350 degrees and line a 9x9-inch baking dish with parchment paper.

Prepare filling: Peel, core and chop the pears into 1/2-inch pieces. You should have about 2 1/2 cups of chopped pears. Add pears, cranberries, sugar and orange juice to a saucepan. Bring the mixture to a boil and cook over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally until pears soften, cranberries burst, and juices are thickened, 7 to 10 minutes. Add vanilla, orange zest and fresh ginger and stir to combine. Remove from heat and let cool while you prepare the crust.

Prepare crust and crumble: In a large bowl, combine flour, brown sugar, almond flour, oats and salt. Stir to combine. Add butter and almond extract, and stir until crumbs are well moistened.

Reserve about 2 1/2 cups/360 grams of the mixture for the topping. Pour remaining crumbs into prepared dish and press them into an even layer. Bake the crust until golden, 10 to 15 minutes.

Spoon filling evenly over the hot crust, top with reserved crumbs, and return pan to oven. Bake until golden, 20 to 25 minutes. Let the bars cool slightly before cutting and serving.

## STFS: Who Are We and What We Do

Western Cascade Fruit Society, our parent organization, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The WCFS was founded in 1980 and is made up of chapters throughout Western Washington whose members are aspiring hobby orchardists and backyard fruit growers. Our primary objective is to bring together new and experienced fruit growers who will promote the science, cultivation and pleasure of growing fruit bearing trees, vines and plants in the home landscape. Local chapters disseminate information through education, fruit shows, orchard tours, meetings, workshops, and publications.

WCFS is the parent organization to nine affiliated chapters. WCFS publishes a quarterly BeeLine newsletter to inform members of events, tours, articles, and reports. Members receive automatic membership in WCFS after joining an affiliated Chapter. WCFS provides other member services, including a member forum, a chapter-wide event calendar, and a home for chapter sites. These can be found at [www.wcfs.org](http://www.wcfs.org).

**Seattle Tree Fruit Society (STFS)** is a chapter of WCFS, one of nine chapters in Western Washington. STFS brings together amateur growers – beginners to experts – from the Greater Seattle area who share an interest in growing fruit and nut trees, berries, kiwis, grapes, and other fruit. We offer information on adapted varieties, up-to-the-minute growing techniques, and share our own experiences growing fruit.

We meet each month from September to May, usually on a Saturday morning. Programs explore topics tailored to Western Washington growers, such as grafting, pruning, pest control, recommended varieties, nurseries, suppliers, home wine and cider making, and more.

STFS members receive both The Urban Scion Post, our monthly newsletter, and The BeeLine, an on-line quarterly from Western Cascade Fruit Society. Both feature a wide variety of useful articles about fruit, and announce upcoming events. Find us on [Facebook](#) and on our website [www.seattletreefruitsociety.com](http://www.seattletreefruitsociety.com).

The function of our STFS **membership** is to **be** the Seattle Tree Fruit Society. This is your organization. Please let us know what is most important to you. STFS can always do more! If there is a way that any of our members feel that STFS can be better, let us know. How can the board of directors be of further help to you as members? Please let board members know. And, some extent, the question is what can you, as a part of our organization, do to make STFS better, be it for your community, your local chapter, or for WCFS, our parent organization. Get involved. Remember, STFS is **you**.

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