



A Garden Compass Re-Publication

...by Dave Wilson Nursery 



White as Snow, Sweet as Honey

by Ed Laivo

In recent years, a few great hybridizers have accelerated white fruit development so that we now have white-fleshed fruit varieties to enjoy for a four-month season—more choice than ever before.

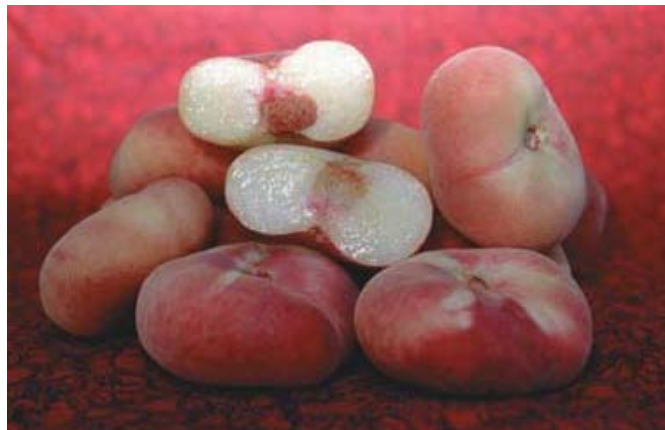
White-fleshed peaches and nectarines have long been savored by home growers and connoisseurs for their sweet, luscious flavor, tantalizing fragrance and novel color. Today the white flesh fruits available are the best they have ever been.

Surprisingly, until about 20 years ago most of the world's hybridizers discarded the white-fleshed fruit that frequently resulted from their crosses. Markets wanted only the firm, yellow-fleshed fruit; the whites were too easily bruised and considered commercially worthless. But in the 1980s, when the Asian markets opened up, they demanded *sub-acid* (low tartness) white-fleshed fruits and paid top dollar for them.

The flat peach '**Stark Saturn**' (Stark Brothers Nursery-1985), also sold as '**Donut**' peach, has caught the eye (and taste buds) of today's white peach fancier. It is self-fruitful and produces a tremendous amount of fruit by the second or third year. These unusual fruits are flat and round, with a sunken center. The flesh is sweet and juicy, often described as having overtones of almond.

'Stark Saturn'
is also sold as '**Donut**' peach

This year Dave Wilson Nursery is introducing '**Sweet Bagel™**', the first yellow-fleshed flat peach available in the U.S. and a worthy companion to the **Donut (Stark Saturn)**.



'Stump-of-the-Earth' (New Jersey-1825) is a good example of the old-time, not-so-pretty, early-season, white-fleshed fruit, delivering pale green skin with a reddish blush. Ah, but the flavor of this old variety is always judged to be very special.

Another strange white variety that appeared in the western world about this same time was the '**Peento**' (China-1869) flat peach or saucer-type peach, but it had little effect on the market then.

An old variety that is still a favorite is the '**Belle of Georgia**' (Georgia-1875). This large, white fruit with a creamy white flesh is renowned for its dessert quality; a great choice for the peach collector who wants everything. It is bud-hardy, a reliable producer, and requires 800 to 850 hours of chill.

'Polly' (Univ. of Iowa-1932), the hardiest of the white peaches (to -20F!), is medium-sized, sweet and tasty, and still a favorite for cold climates. For some tasters, the unique white (and red!) peach '**Indian Free**' (or *Indian Blood Free* - origin obscure) is still unsurpassed among the white fruits. The intense aroma and tart-sweet flavor of a fully tree-ripe **Indian Free** has to be experienced to be believed. It needs 700 hours of chill and requires another peach (or nectarine) as a pollinizer.

Two other popular whites from the past are still highly regarded: '**Nectar**' (California-1935, thought to be a seedling of Stanwick white nectarine), considered by some to be the finest white peach of all time, and '**Strawberry Free**' (California-1959), a superb white-fleshed variety that has also helped set the standard for the flavor of today's white peaches.

Early varieties included *Pavie de Pomponne peach* (France-1655), *Grosse Mignonne peach* (France-1667) and the all-time favorite *Petite Mignonne peach* (France-1670).

The English also selected and named some early varieties of white-fleshed fruit, including *Nutmeg peach* (England-1629) and *Barrington peach* (England-1670). And one of the earliest white nectarines: *Elruge* (**England**-1670).

'George IV' (New York-1821), a richly flavored and aromatic mid-season variety has greenish white skin with gold and brownish-red markings.

In the 18th and early 19th centuries, white-fleshed varieties turned up all over the world with a few varieties coming from the U.S. (Varieties here **in bold** are still available. All except **Indian Free** are thought to be self-fruitful.)

One of the oldest varieties still available is an American variety: '**White Heath**' (New York-1760).



It is a late-ripening (September), white-fleshed, clingstone with a rich, unique flavor. It requires 500 to 600 hours of winter chill and is hardy and vigorous.

Many outstanding varieties of white peaches have been introduced in the past 20 years. **'Tropic Snow'** (Florida-1988) has proven itself as one of the best home orchard peaches for mild winter climates—it has an ideal acid-sugar balance and requires only 200 hours of chill. **'Champagne'** (Armstrong Nursery, California-1982) is a medium chill variety (500 hours) that has low acid and a mild, sweet, pleasing flavor.

In 1933 a remarkable new white peach (which was to become a West Coast favorite) was introduced: a cross between Strawberry and Peento, the **'Babcock'**.

The popular white 'Babcock' peach.....

For years, **Babcock** was the only white peach most people knew about. If a white peach is to be a player in today's home orchard it has to be as good as or better than **Babcock**. One of the many **Babcock** descendants was *Springtime* (Armstrong Nursery-1953), a very early, mild-flavored, exceptionally juicy white peach often referred to as a "water peach" — a popular variety in the 1960s and 70s.



'Arctic Supreme' (Zaiger-1990) is a wonderfully flavored fruit with more acid than the typical white peach — the acid-sugar balance that generally appeals to the European-American palate. Arctic Supreme twice has been the top-rated fruit at Dave Wilson Nursery tastings. It requires about 800 hours of chill.

The low acid, high sugar and exquisite flavor of the recently introduced **'Snow Beauty'** (Zaiger-1999) produced one of the highest scores ever in the eight years of **Dave Wilson taste tests**.

Another important new variety for home growing is the Q-1-8 (WSU research station, Mt. Vernon, WA), a sweet and juicy white peach with a sprightly flavor from a peach-leaf-curl resistant tree.

Over 150 years ago there was discovered a white nectarine with a flavor so interesting it is still being grown today—the **'Stanwick'** (England-1843), a green skinned fruit with a dark red blush. The early white-fleshed nectarines were mostly green skinned—no wonder they weren't more popular—people couldn't tell when to pick them.

- **Genetically, nectarines are nearly identical to peaches, differences being the nectarines' fuzzless skin and intense flavor. Many peaches and nectarines, in fact, have both peach and nectarine ancestors.**
- **'Goldmine'** (New Zealand-1900) became and still is a widely grown white nectarine. It was somewhat more attractive than previous white varieties—a murky, tannish-green with a red blush—and it performed in a wide range of climates. The fruit is small to medium size with good flavor and the tree is productive; it wasn't a great variety, but there were no other choices!
- One other notable old variety is **'John Rivers'** (England-1924): although green-skinned and unattractive, John Rivers's aromatic sweet flesh and distinctive flavor have stood the test of time—it's still a worthy collector's variety.
- From crosses of **Goldmine** and yellow freestone peaches came **'Silver Lode'** (Armstrong Nursery-1951), a low-chill white nectarine of exceptional flavor. The John Rivers gave rise to the **'Rose'** Nectarine (Fred Anderson-1955), a delicious, subacid white nectarine that set the foundation for today's great flavored red-skinned varieties.

White-fleshed fruits have been cultivated for hundreds of years and have occurred in nature for thousands. Records of white-fleshed peach varieties can be traced to the mid-1600s, and white-fleshed nectarines to the late 1700s.

Variety	Origin
Nutmeg peach	England 1629
Pavie de Pamphone peach	France 1655
Gross Mignonne peach	France 1667
Barrington peach	England 1670
Elruge nectarine	England 1670
Petite Mignonne peach	France 1670

White Lady peach

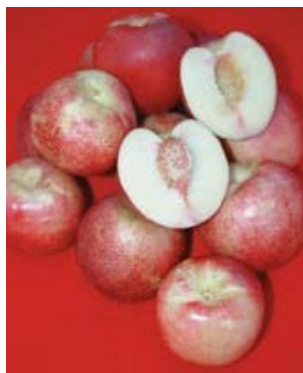


'White Lady' (Zaiger Genetics, California -1986) is one of the best tasting new freestones: low acid and a full, rich flavor. It requires 800 hours of chill and is widely adapted, tolerating fluctuating spring weather conditions.

The dominant white nectarines of today have all been developed in the past 30 years.

Snow Queen nectarine.....

'Snow Queen' (Armstrong-1975), a low chill white nectarine (2-300 hours) has the most satisfying, sweet flavor of any nectarine to date.



'Heavenly White' (Zaiger-1983) is the heavyweight champion of white nectarines, with fruit often reaching 1 lb. A perfect acid-sugar balance combined with a rich, complex flavor makes this fruit a connoisseur's delight — it's always one of the highest rated nectarines in the Dave Wilson taste tests. Requiring 650 hours of chill, it is recommended for all but the warmest and coldest western zones.

The first of the new, firm, sweet-to-super-sweet white nectarines was a Babcock descendant, 'Arctic Rose' (Zaiger-1992), a fruit with a rich, super-sweet flavor all its own. With a chill requirement of 600-700 hours; trials have yielded good results in moderate climates including the colder areas of Southern California.

The super-sweet, subacid 'Arctic Star' (Zaiger-1995) is the earliest-ripening of the white nectarines and one of the best. It's a proven producer for warm winter climates, requiring 300 hours of chill.

Two other new white nectarines are candidates for "best white nectarine": 'Arctic Jay' (Zaiger-1997) and 'Arctic Blaze' (Zaiger-1998), which ripen in early July and late August, respectively. Both fruits have superior flavor and have earned top taste test honors. Their unique complex flavors typify the continuing improvement of the white-fleshed fruits. Arctic Jay is richly flavored with balanced acid and sugar; Arctic Blaze is sub-acid and very sweet when fully ripe.

- These two would make great companions in a 4-in-1-hole planting.

Arctic Glo nectarine



'Arctic Glo' (Zaiger-1992) is my favorite variety of white-fleshed fruit. The flavor is unlike any other nectarine, a sweet-tart flavor unique to the Arctic Glo. An early season variety, ripening in late June in the mid-Central Valley of California—400-500 hours of chill is adequate for Arctic Glo.

