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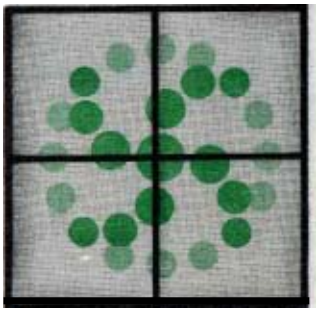

PLANT SCIENCES

POMOLOGY (GENEVA) • NUMBER 9

NEW YORK STATE AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION, GENEVA, A DIVISION OF THE NEW YORK STATE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES, A STATUTORY COLLEGE OF THE STATE UNIVERSITY, CORNELL UNIVERSITY, ITHACA

Seneca plum named

John Watson

The plum industry in New York has declined from nearly a million trees in 1900 to 137,000 trees in 1971. This decline has been in a large part due to improvements in transportation, allowing other states to ship in produce economically, and to the decline in the small farm which could no longer compete on an equitable basis. Most of the present plum production in New York is oriented toward the processing industry, especially for baby food.

There should still be, however, a place for the small farm to compete successfully in producing high quality, locally grown, fresh-from-the-tree fruit for local markets, especially roadside stands. The increase in population in recent years has produced many more potential customers, and a man with a good product should be able to profitably grow fresh fruit for local use, given a good growing and marketing location.

The plum breeding program at Geneva is primarily aimed at producing prune-type plums similar to Stanley and ripening over an extended period. This would allow a longer harvesting and marketing period for commercial plums that are suitable for both processing and fresh fruit use. Occasionally, selections will appear that do not fit directly into this category but may have enough value for other uses so that their potential must be considered. We, therefore, continually screen our seedling populations for selections that may be of value as breeding material or for fresh fruit.

NAMING OF SENECA

Seneca (N. Y. 981) is being named in 1972 as a home garden and local market variety because of its large size, attractiveness, and good quality. It is not a processing type but a good fresh fruit variety, which should improve the quality of fresh plums available in the first week or two of September and provide attractive fruit for the local market.

Seneca is the result of a cross made in 1937 between Italian Prune and Prinlew. From a population of only two seedlings, Seneca was chosen for second test trial in 1949. It has been available for trial as N. Y. 981 and listed in the catalog of the New York State Fruit Testing Cooperative Association, Geneva, N. Y. since 1956.

The tree of Seneca is rather upright and vigorous, moderately productive, moderately hardy, and self-unfruitful. The fruit is large, oval, attractive, reddish purple, and will hang well for 2 weeks or more. The flesh is firm, fine grained, amber in color, and good to very good in quality. The season is the first week in September at Geneva, with spot picking desirable to obtain the best condition of fruit over the extended ripening period. The fruit is slightly susceptible to Brown Rot, especially if mechanical injury, such as hail damage, should occur. Slight surface cracking may occur during heavy rains at or near maturity.

Seneca is therefore a large, attractive, firm, good quality fruit that should serve well the need of better quality plums for home garden and local market use. The name commemorates the Indians of the area who for many years tilled the soil and harvested the crops before being displaced by the white man.