

Prairie cherries

The University of Saskatchewan has introduced a series of dwarf cherries that are easy to grow and delicious. Two of these varieties are approved for planting in the USA today: 'SK Carmine Jewel' and 'SK Crimson Passion'.

These Canadian cherries grow only 6 to 8 feet tall and can be trained into trees or shrubs (very little to no suckering). They are extremely hardy (Zone 2) and show very few disease problems.

Plants are self-pollinating and usually begin producing after two to three years. Each plant can produce 20 pounds of dark maroon, quarter-sized cherries per year.

Both varieties have been tested at the NDSU Carrington Research Extension Center and look promising.

Kathy Wiederholt, the Fruit Project Manager at the Center, reports that 'SK Carmine Jewel' is "exceptional for pies, cooking, juice, wine, or flavoring for ice cream or yogurt. The cherries are juicier than sweet cherries and have similar sugar levels, but ad-



ditional citric acid makes them tarter." This variety is available from St. Lawrence, Gurney's, and Henry Fields nurseries.

'SK Crimson Passion' has extremely high sugar content (brix rating of 22 degrees), larger fruits than 'SK Carmine Jewel' and is excellent for eating fresh. I am not aware of a source for this variety yet.

More varieties in this "Romance" series of cherries, including 'Romeo' and 'Juliet' have been released in Canada and will be available to Americans soon.

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Extension Service

Written by Tom Kalb,
Extension Horticulturist, NDSU
tom.kalb@ndsu.edu

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