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Sherman

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[54] PLUM TREE NAMED 'GULFBLAZE'

[76] Inventor: Wayne B. Sherman, University of FL,  
P.O. Box 110690, Gainesville, Fla.  
32611-0690

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[56] References Cited

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Primary Examiner—Howard J. Locker

Assistant Examiner—Kent L. Bell

[57] ABSTRACT

A Japanese type plum tree characterized by its low winter chilling adaptation to central and north Florida, and mid to late May ripening of dark red skin fruit with orange-yellow flesh and regular, high annual fruit production.

1 Drawing Sheet

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BACKGROUND OF THE NEW VARIETY

The present invention relates to a new and distinct variety of plum tree, which will herein after be denominated vari-  
etally as 'Gulfblaze' plum tree which is adapted in flower-  
ing, foliation, and annual production to central and north  
Florida. Contrast is made to 'Gulfruby' plum for reliable  
description. This new variety is a promising candidate for  
commercial success in that it has disease resistance and  
adaptation for low to medium chill environments and pro-  
duces red skin fruit ripening in mid to late May.

ORIGIN OF THE VARIETY

This invention relates to the discovery and asexual propa-  
gation of a new variety of Japanese-type plum tree, *Prunus*  
*salicina*, originating from the University of Florida stone-  
fruit breeding program. 'Gulfblaze' originated from a 4<sup>th</sup>  
generation polycross of Florida selections. The original  
cross was made in 1967 by hybridizing 'Ozark Premier',  
'Burbank', 'Beauty' and 'Bruce' with pollen from Taiwan,  
all un-patented. 'Taiwan' resulted from a seedling selection  
of a 1959 seed importation of 'Hung-ju' (unpatented) open  
pollinated. The present variety was selected as the 7<sup>th</sup> plum  
selection in 1987 and has been tested as Fla. 87-7.

Asexual Reproduction of the Variety

'Gulfblaze' has been asexually propagated by budding  
onto Flordaguard peach rootstock in our experimental  
orchard at Gainesville for three generations, which shows  
that characteristics are uniformly transmitted through suc-  
ceeding generations.

SUMMARY OF THE VARIETY

This new and distinct variety of plum tree is large,  
vigorous, and semi-spreading in growth. It has an estimated  
winter chilling requirements of 250 chill units, but appears  
to have a high heat requirement for breaking dormancy.  
'Gulfblaze' trees bloom before the earliest standard Japanese  
varieties at Gainesville, but with or after the earliest standard  
Japanese varieties in north Florida locations. Winter tem-  
peratures of 14F. in Florida have not damaged wood or  
flower and leaf buds. 'Gulfblaze' is adapted to the mild  
winters of central and north Florida, flowering with 'Gul-  
fruby' (unpatented) plum and is cross pollinated by 'Gul-  
fruby'. 'Gulfblaze' is an efficient pollinizer for 'Gulfruby' as  
neither are self fruitful. 'Gulfblaze' is a regular and produc-

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tive bearer of medium large, firm, semi-freestone fruit with  
good eating quality and a sour skin. The fruit is further  
characterized by having deep burgundy skin, firm, orangish  
flesh and hanging on the tree 10 days after maturity  
(shipping ripe) and ripening 7 to 10 days after 'Gulfruby'.  
Fruit set is very high and heavy fruit thinning may be  
required to prevent limb breakage and size fruit properly.  
This new variety is distinguished from 'Gulfruby' in a higher  
degree of resistance to bacterial leaf spot (*Xanthomonas*  
*campestris*) on leaves, twigs, and fruit, orange flesh, larger  
fruit, and later ripening. Fruit of 'Gulfblaze' are highly  
resistant to sunscald, concentric skin cracks, and split stones.  
Leaves have moderate resistance to leaf scald (*Xylella*  
*fastidiosa*).

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

The accompanying drawing is a color photograph which  
illustrates a typical stem and leaves, and ripe fruit as viewed  
from the stem and distal ends, and side views perpendicular  
and parallel to the suture. The photograph was taken at the  
time the fruit was picked (shipping ripe) and the colors are  
as nearly true as is reasonably possible in a color represen-  
tation of this type.

DETAILED BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION

The following is a detailed botanical description of 'Gulf-  
blaze' plum tree, its foliage, flowers, and fruit, based on  
observations of specimens grown at Gainesville, Fla. on  
Flordaguard peach rootstock. Color names with capital  
letters designate values based upon the Pantone Book of  
Color published in 1990 by Harry N. Abrams, Inc. N.Y.

Tree:

- Size.—Large and in the upper range for a Japanese plum.
- Vigor.—Vigorous and in the upper range for a Japanese plum.
- Form.—Semi-spreading.
- Density.—Medium dense in branching habit and in the middle range for a Japanese plum.
- Shape.—Rounded.
- Productivity.—Productive and requires fruit thinning to prevent limb breakage and size fruit.
- Bearing.—Regular and uniform on both spurs and whips.



*Cold hardiness.*—Hardy under Florida temperatures of 14F.

*Chilling requirement.*—Estimated 250 chill units based on bloom time and fruitfulness following annually diverse chilling in Florida. This is in the low range for Japanese plums.

**Trunk:**

*Size.*—Medium as trunk diameter is in the middle range for a Japanese plum.

*Texture.*—Medium shaggy, developing a moderate amount of peeling bark.

*Color.*—Lead Grey (Pantone 17-118).

**Branch:**

*Size.*—Medium diameters as scaffold branches are in the middle range for Japanese plum.

*Texture.*—Smooth.

*Lenticels.*—Medium number and in the middle range for a Japanese plum. 2 mm length and 0.5 to 1 mm width.

*Color.*—Pecan Brown (Pantone 17-1436) in 2 year wood and Green Oasis (Pantone 15-0538) in immature current seasons growth (whips).

*Fruiting.*—Fruits on spurs and branches (whips).

**Leaves:**

*Size.*—127 mm length (including petiole), 46 mm wide.  
*Form.*—Wide elliptical with acuminate tip and acute base.

*Margin.*—Double serrate.

*Thickness.*—Medium and in the middle range for a Japanese plum.

*Surface.*—Upper, rugose; Lower, medium large veins.

*Texture.*—Glabrous.

*Petiole.*—14 mm length and Cedar (Pantone 16-0526), turning red in autumn.

*Glands.*—0 to 2 medium globose glands on upper portion of petiole or base of leaf blade.

*Color.*—Lower, Forest Green (Pantone 17-0230); Upper, Chive (Pantone 19-0323).

**Flower buds:**

*Size.*—Small and slightly shorter than leaf bud at the node.

*Length.*—Medium, 2 mm length.

*Form.*—Plump and free.

*Color.*—Dark Earth (Pantone 19-1020).

**Flowers:**

*Blossom period.*—About 10 days.

*Size.*—Small to medium for the range in Japanese plums.

*Pollen.*—Abundant and yellow.

*Color.*—White.

*Date.*—Bloom ranging February 5 to 15 at Gainesville.

*Aroma.*—Moderately scented and in the middle range for a Japanese plum.

**Fruit:**

*Maturity date.*—May 22–25 at Gainesville.

*Weight.*—75 to 80 grams.

*Size.*—Length 5.2 cm; Width 4.9 to 5.0 cm.

*Form.*—Round to slightly elliptic.

*Suture.*—Slightly furrowed at stem to the tip.

*Base.*—Nearly round, slightly flat.

*Apex.*—Round with furrow at suture.

*Cavity.*—Circular at top to bottom — 3 mm depth; 1 cm wide at top; 2 mm wide at bottom.

*Stem.*—Medium. 4 to 5 mm length.

**Flesh:**

*Texture.*—Firm and fine.

*Fibers.*—Texture.

*Flavor or eating quality.*—Sweet flesh with a tart skin.

*Juice.*—Juicy.

*Aroma.*—Lightly scented.

*Color.*—Apricot (Pantone 15-1153) to Marigold (Pantone 14-1450).

*Cavity.*—Small air pocket in flesh at stem end of the stone.

**Skin:**

*Thickness.*—Medium and in the middle range for a Japanese plum.

*Texture.*—Medium and in the middle range for a Japanese plum.

*Bloom (wax).*—Moderate and easily rubbed leaving shiny surface.

*Taste.*—Sour or tart.

*Color.*—Cardinal (Pantone 18-1643) at harvest.

**Stone:**

*Type.*—Semi freestone.

*Size.*—Length 2 cm. Width 1.6 cm.

*Form.*—Ovate.

*Base.*—Rounded.

*Apex.*—Acuminate.

*Sides.*—Equal.

*Ridges.*—1 to 2 mm ridges on dorsal and ventral sides.

*Color.*—Gold Earth (Pantone 15-1234).

**Use.** Local and long distance for fresh markets. The plum tree and its fruit herein described may vary slightly in detail due to climate, soil conditions, and cultural practices under which the variety may be grown.

**We claim:**

1. A new and distinct variety of plum tree, substantially as illustrated and described, which is vigorous, large, and semi-spreading in growth with a low winter chilling requirement for adaption to north central and north Florida producing an annual crop of medium large semi freestone fruit with full red skin and orange flesh, which ripens 7 to 10 days after 'Gulfruby' and having firm flesh with good fresh market shipping characteristics.

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