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[54] APRICOT TREE NAMED ‘ALEX’
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[58] Field of Search Plt./39, 186

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GTITM UPOVROM Citation for ‘Alex’ as per NZ PBR SFM062, Jul. 14, 1995.

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[57] ABSTRACT

The present invention relates to a new and improved variety of apricot tree. The fruit of the new variety is characterised by attractive bright orange color with a pink-red blush, medium size, and firm flesh with an excellent sweet flavor. The tree is characterised by moderately vigorous healthy growth and spreading to upright tree habit. The new variety has been named ‘Alex’.

1 Drawing Sheet

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ORIGIN OF THE VARIETY

The new and distinct variety of apricot tree (*Prunus armeniaca*) was selected from a population of approximately 2000 seedlings originated by Dr. Ron Beatson in 1986. The seedlings were grown on a site near Clyde, Central Otago, New Zealand’s major apricot growing area. The seedlings began to fruit in 1990, and were evaluated for tree health and fruit flavor, and to a lesser extent skin finish, size and color. In 1993, 49 elite seedlings were selected by Dr. Dominique Noiton from this population and grafted onto rootstocks for further evaluation. One of the seedlings, an open-pollinated seedling of ‘CluthaGold’ (a New Zealand variety that has been granted Plant Variety Rights in New Zealand on Jun. 16, 1988 under Grant No. 411, and in France on Jan. 2, 1997 under Grant No. 09961) showed desirable commercial characteristics after initial evaluation and was propagated for further trials. Furthermore the new and distinct variety has been named ‘Alex’.

The present new apricot tree was first asexually propagated at Clyde, Central Otago, by budding onto Golden Queen peach rootstocks, the standard apricot rootstock in New Zealand. Seedling rootstocks are routinely used in New Zealand for ease of propagation. “Golden Queen” is a peach (*Prunus persica*) variety that is commonly used because it is readily available and easily propagated from stones. It is a relatively vigorous stock that imparts vigor to the scion variety similar to that of trees on their own roots. It also imparts some tolerance to bacterial diseases such as *Pseudomonas syringae*. The resulting trees have propagated true-to-type showing that the distinctive characteristics are established and transmitted successfully through succeeding generations.

DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIETY

The new and distinct variety of apricot tree is of medium size, moderately vigorous spreading-upright growth, and is a regular and productive bearer of medium sized, firm, juicy fruit with sweet flavor and excellent eating quality. The fruit is further characterised by late season ripening. ‘Alex’ is similar in appearance to the apricot ‘CluthaGold’, however,

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‘Alex’ has a higher amount of red blush, is more flavorsome, and furthermore, ripens 2–3 weeks after ‘CluthaGold’.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ILLUSTRATION

The accompanying photograph shows typical specimens of fruit and foliage of the new variety shortly after picking at commercial harvest maturity. The fruit is shown in side view with the suture facing up (top right), view of the apex end (bottom right), side view (top left), view of the stem end (bottom left), a view of the fruit split along the suture line (top middle), and a view of the stone.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The following is a detailed description of the new and distinct variety of apricot tree based on observation of the specimens grown in Havelock North, New Zealand. Color code terminology (except those in common terms) is in accordance with The Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart.

Tree:

Size.—The mature tree, from the age of six years and older is typically about 4 meters high by about 6 meters wide, when grown as a multi-leader vase-shaped tree; typically the amount of growth during one growing season (one year) on any shoot is about 800 to about 1200 mm; stem and caliper are typical of the species.

Vigor.—Moderate.

Form.—Spreading to upright growth habit.

Productivity.—Typical production from a mature tree of five years or older is about 50 kg/tree.

Bearing.—Regular.

Tree Health.—Very healthy.

Trunk:

Form.—Stocky.

Texture.—Rough.

Color.—Dark brown (200B).

Branches:

Size.—Medium thickness, long.

Surface.—Rough.

Lenticels.—Numerous, prominent, aligned across the direction of the branch (165D).

Color of mature wood.—Dark brown (200B).

Color of fresh growth.—Dark red (184A).

Leaves:

Size.—Between 80–90 mm long and 70–80 mm wide for mature leaves.

Shape of tip.—Cuspidate.

Shape.—Cordate.

Angle of tip.—Obtuse.

Shape of base.—Truncate.

Petiole.—About 45 mm long, 3–5 mm wide. Red coloration (184A) Upper surface grooved.

Glands.—Ranging from 1–4 with an average of 2. Positioned on upper portion of petiole.

Margin.—Serrate.

Color.—Upper side, green (146A). Lower side, green (146B).

Flower buds:

Size.—Medium.

Length.—Medium.

Shape.—Round, plump.

Form.—Free.

Surface.—Not pubescent.

Flowers:

Blooming period.—Bloom commences approximately on October 29th.

Size.—Medium, about 25 mm in diameter.

Color.—Near 155D.

Fruit:

Maturity when described.—Eating ripe.

Date of picking.—3rd week of February.

Size.—Very large. Average diameter axially, 60 mm. Average transversely in suture plane, 68 mm.

Weight.—Average of 90 gms.

Form.—Oblong.

Suture.—Shallow, extends from stem to apex.

Fruit flavor.—Sweet, low acid, typical apricot flavor.

Juice.—The fruit will express juice if squeezed.

Sugar content.—13–17% Brix.

Cavity.—Rounded.

Apex.—Rounded.

Skin:

Thickness.—Medium.

Texture.—Smooth, very shiny.

Tendency to crack.—None.

Down.—Scant, very short.

Color.—Deep orange colour 25A with a bright red overblush 46B on 30–40% of the fruit surface.

Flesh:

Ripens.—Evenly.

Texture.—Firm.

Fibres.—Small, few, tender.

Flavor.—Excellent, sweet.

Eating quality.—Excellent.

Color.—Near the skin, orange 25B. Near the stone, orange 25D.

Stone:

Type.—Freestone, some flesh adherence along ventral edge.

Size.—Typical of the species.

Form.—Ovoid.

Base.—Straight.

Apex.—Nearly rounded.

Surface.—Regularly pitted.

Ridges.—Two distinct ridges towards the sharp end of the stone running on each side of the suture plane.

Color.—Dark brown 164A.

Tendency to split.—None.

Use: Dessert

Market.—Local and export.

Keeping quality.—Good.

Shipping quality.—Good.

The tree, flowers, and fruit may vary in slight detail due to variations in soil types, cultural practices and climatic conditions; the present botanical description is that of the variety grown Clyde, Central Otago, New Zealand.

We claim:

1. A new and distinct variety of apricot tree named ‘Alex’, substantially as illustrated and described.

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