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(54) **CHERRY TREE NAMED ‘ROYAL LETTY’**

(50) Latin Name: *Prunus avium*  
Varietal Denomination: **ROYAL LETTY**

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See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A new and distinct variety of cherry tree. The following features of the tree and its fruit are characterized with the tree budded on ‘Mahaleb’ Rootstock (non-patented), grown on Handford sandy loam soil with Storie Index rating 95, in USDA Hardiness Zone 9, near Modesto, Calif., with standard commercial fruit growing practices, such as pruning, thinning, spraying, irrigation and fertilization. Its novelty consist of the following combination of desirable features:

1. Tree with a vigorous, upright growth habit.
2. Regular and productive bearer of medium to large size fruit.
3. Fruit with an attractive red skin color.
4. Fruit with firm flesh that has good handling and shipping qualities.
5. Fruit with very good flavor and eating quality with a good balance between acid and sugar.

**1 Drawing Sheet**

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Botanical designation: *Prunus avium*.  
Variety denomination: ‘ROYAL LETTY’.

**BACKGROUND OF THE VARIETY**

**Field of the Invention**

In the field of plant genetics, we conduct an extensive and continuing plant-breeding program including the organization and asexual reproduction of orchard trees, and of which plums, peaches, nectarines, apricots, cherries, almonds and interspecifics are exemplary. It was against this background of our activities that the present variety of cherry tree was originated and asexually reproduced by us in our experimental orchard located near Modesto, Stanislaus County, Calif.

**PRIOR VARIETIES**

Among the existing varieties of cherry trees, which are known to us, and mentioned herein, ‘Minnie Royal’ Cherry (U.S. Plant Pat. No. 12,942), ‘Royal Hazel’ Cherry (U.S. Plant Pat. No. 19,920) and the proprietary non-patented cherry seedling selection ‘22ZB615’.

**STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Not applicable.

**ORIGIN OF THE VARIETY**

The present new variety of cherry tree (*Prunus avium*) was originated by us in our experimental orchard located

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near Modesto, Calif., as an open pollinated seedling from a non-patented cherry seedling selection with the field identification number ‘22ZB615’, which originated as an open pollinated seedling selection from ‘Minnie Royal’ Cherry (U.S. Plant Pat. No. 12,942). A large group of these open pollinated seedlings were budded and maintained on established ‘Mahaleb’ Rootstock (non-patented) to accelerate fruit production for evaluation. Under close and careful observation the present seedling exhibited desirable fruit and tree characteristics and was selected in 2004 for additional asexual reproduction and commercialization.

**ASEXUAL REPRODUCTION OF THE VARIETY**

In 2004, asexual reproduction of the new and distinct variety of cherry tree was by budding to ‘Mahaleb’ Rootstock (non-patented), as performed by us in our experimental orchard located near Modesto, Calif., and shows that reproductions run true to the original tree and all characteristics of the tree and its fruit are established and transmitted through succeeding asexual propagations.

**SUMMARY OF THE NEW VARIETY**

The present new variety of cherry tree (*Prunus avium*) is of large size, vigorous, upright growth and a regular and productive bearer of medium to large size fruit with attractive red skin color. The fruit is further characterized by having very good flavor and eating quality with good handling and shipping qualities. In comparison to its non-patented cherry parent (22ZB615) the fruit of the new variety is larger in size and is approximately 13 days later in

maturity. In comparison to the commercial variety 'Minnie Royal' Cherry (U.S. Plant Pat. No. 19,920) the fruit of the new variety is approximately 14 days later in maturity.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE PHOTOGRAPH

The accompanying color photographic illustration shows typical specimens of the foliage and fruit of the present new cherry variety.

The illustration shows the upper and lower surface of the leaves, an exterior and sectional view of a single fruit divided in its suture plane to show flesh color, pit cavity and the stone remaining in place.

The photographic illustration was taken shortly after being picked (shipping ripe) from a 10 year old tree and the colors are as nearly true as is reasonably possible in a color representation of this type.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIETY

The following is a detailed botanical description of the new variety of cherry tree, its flowers, foliage and fruit, as based on observations of 10 year old specimens grown near Modesto, Calif., with color in accordance with Munsell Book of Color published in 1958.

Tree:

*Size.*—Large, usually pruned to 3 to 3.5 meters in height and width for economical harvesting of fruit. Varies with different cultural practices.

*Vigor.*—Vigorous, tree growth of approximately 1.5 to 2 meters in height the first growing season. Varies with cultural practices, soil type, fertility and climatic conditions.

*Form.*—Upright growth, usually pruned to vase shape. *Branching habit.*—Upright, crotch angle approximately 35°, increases with heavy crop load.

*Productivity.*—Productive. Produces adequate fruit set annually.

*Bearer.*—Regular, has had adequate fruit set 8 consecutive years. No alternate bearing observed.

*Fertility.*—Self sterile, pollinator required.

*Density.*—Medium dense, usually pruned to vase shape to increase amount of sunlight to center of tree to enhance fruit color, Brix and health of fruit spurs.

*Hardiness.*—Hardy in all stone fruit growing areas of California. Tree grown in USDA Hardiness Zone 9. Winter chilling requirement approximately 750 hours at or below 45° F.

Trunk:

*Size.*—Large. Average circumference 46.9 cm at 34.1 cm above ground on a 10 year old tree.

*Stocky.*—Medium stocky.

*Texture.*—Medium shaggy, roughness increases with age.

*Color.*—Varies from 10YR 5/2 to 2.5Y 6/2.

Branches:

*Size.*—Medium. Average circumference 12.5 cm at 1.2 meters above ground. Crotch angle approximately 35°, increases with heavy crop load.

*Surface texture.*—New growth relatively smooth. Mature growth medium rough, roughness increases with age.

*Lenticels.*—Average number 28 in a 25.8 square cm section. Average length 3.8 mm. Average width 1.8 mm. Color varies from 7.5YR 6/10 to 7.5YR 5/8.

*Color.*—New growth varies from 2.5GY 5/6 to 2.5GY 5/8. Mature growth varies from 7.5YR 3/2 to 7.5YR 2/4, varies with age of growth.

Leaves:

*Size.*—Large. Average length 140.6 mm. Average width 73.7 mm.

*Form.*—Lanceolate.

*Apex.*—Acuminate.

*Base.*—Cuneate.

*Margin.*—Doubly serrate.

*Thickness.*—Medium.

*Surface texture.*—Upper surface relatively smooth, slight indentations over midrib and leaf veins. Lower surface relatively smooth, except for small ridges created by midrib and pinnate venation. Both upper and lower surfaces glabrous.

*Petiole.*—Average length 36.8 mm. Average width 2.5 mm. Longitudinally grooved. Surface — glabrous. Color varies from 10Y 5/8 to 10R 2/6.

*Glands.*—Type — reniform. Size — large. Average length 2.3 mm. Average diameter 1.7 mm. Average number 2, varies from 2 to 4. Located primarily on the upper portion of the petiole and base of the leaf blade. Color varies from 5R 2/8 to 2.5GY 5/8.

*Stipules.*—None present at time of measurement.

*Color.*—Upper surface varies from 5GY 3/6 to 7.5GY 3/6. Lower surface varies from 5GY 4/4 to 5GY 4/6. Midvein color varies from 10Y 6/6 to 10Y 7/6.

Flower buds:

*Size.*—Large. Average length 15.0 mm. Average diameter 9.5 mm.

*Hardiness.*—Hardy with respect to California winters.

*Density.*—Dense.

*Form.*—Conical, becoming elongated just before opening.

*Pedicel.*—Average length 14.0 mm. Average width 0.9 mm. Color varies from 5GY 5/6 to 5GY 5/8. Surface glabrous.

*Color.*—N 9.5/(white).

*Number of buds per spur.*—Average number 5, varies from 4 to 6.

Flowers:

*Blooming period.*—Date of First Bloom Mar. 11, 2014. Date of Petal Fall Mar. 20, 2014, varies slightly with climatic conditions.

*Size.*—Medium to large. Average height 17.1 mm. Average diameter 33.4 mm.

*Petals.*—Number — normally 5, alternately arranged to sepals. Size — medium to large. Average length 15.1 mm. Average width 15.7 mm. Form — ovate to orbicular. Arrangement — overlapping. Petal apex — rounded. Petal base — rounded to somewhat truncated. Margin — entire. Color N 9.5/(white). Both upper and lower surfaces glabrous.

*Sepals.*—Number — normally 5, alternately arranged to petals. Size — large. Average length 7.1 mm. Average width 5.0 mm. Shape — triangular. Apex rounded to triangular. Margin — entire. Both upper and lower surfaces glabrous. Color — upper surface varies from 5GY 5/6 to 5GY 4/6. Lower surface varies from 5GY 4/6 to 7.5R 2/6.

*Stamens.*—Average number per flower 37. Average filament length 10.9 mm. Filament color N 9.5/

(white). Anther color varies from 5Y 8/8 to 5Y 8/10.  
 On average, the stamens are even with the height of the petals.

*Pollen*.—Self sterile, pollinator required. Color varies from 5Y 7/10 to 5Y 7/12.

*Pistil*.—Normally 1. Average length 14.1 mm. Position of stigma even with height of the anthers. Surface—glabrous. Color varies from 10Y 7/6 to 2.5GY 7/6.

*Fragrance*.—Very slight.

*Color*.—N 9.5/(white).

*Pedice*.—Large. Average length 15.5 mm. Average width 1.1 mm. Color varies from 2.5GY 5/8 to 5GY 5/6.

*Number flowers per flower bud*.—Average 3, varies from 2 to 6.

**Fruit:**

*Maturity when described*.—Firm ripe and ready for consumption.

*Date of first picking*.—May 15, 2014.

*Date of last picking*.—May 25, 2014, varies slightly with climatic conditions.

*Size*.—Medium to large. Average diameter axially 22.9 mm. Average transversely in suture plane 22.6 mm. Average weight 8.5 grams, varies slightly with fertility of the soil amount of thinning and climatic conditions.

*Form*.—Globose.

*Suture*.—Nearly smooth.

*Ventral surface*.—Smooth.

*Apex*.—Rounded.

*Base*.—Retuse.

*Stem cavity*.—Rounded. Average depth 1.7 mm. Average diameter 4.6 mm.

**Stem:**

*Size*.—Large. Average length 38.9 mm. Average diameter 1.6 mm.

*Color*.—Varies from 5GY 5/6 to 5GY 4/6.

**Flesh:**

*Ripens*.—Evenly.

*Texture*.—Firm.

*Fibers*.—Few, small, tender.

*Firmness*.—Firm, comparable to other commercial cherry varieties.

*Aroma*.—Heavy aroma.

*Amygdalin*.—Undetected.

*Eating quality*.—Very good.

*Flavor*.—Very good, good balance between acid and sugar.

*Juice*.—Heavy amount, enhances flavor.

*Acidity*.—Not available.

*Brix*.—Average Brix 17.8°, varies slightly with amount of fruit per tree and climatic conditions.

*Color*.—Varies from 5Y 9/2 to 7.5R 3/8.

*Pit cavity*.—Average length 12.3 mm. Average width 10.2 mm. Average depth 4.0 mm. Color varies from 5R 3/8 to 7.5R 3/8.

**Skin:**

*Thickness*.—Medium.

*Surface*.—Smooth.

*Bloom*.—Wanting.

*Tendency to crack*.—None during dry weather. Only slight tendency to crack in wet weather, varies with stage of maturity.

*Color*.—Varies from 5R 2/4 to 7.5R 2/8.

*Tenacity*.—Tenacious to flesh.

*Astringency*.—Undetected.

**Stone:**

*Type*.—Clingstone, medium adherence to flesh.

*Size*.—Medium. Average length 11.3 mm. Average width 9.2 mm. Average thickness 7.3 mm.

*Form*.—Ovoid.

*Base*.—Round.

*Apex*.—Pointed. Average length 0.3 mm.

*Surface*.—Very slightly pitted throughout. Small ridges run along each side of the suture line from base to apex.

*Sides*.—Varies from equal to unequal with one side extending further from the suture plane.

*Ridges*.—Relatively smooth, a small narrow ridge on each side of suture extending from base toward apex.

*Tendency to split*.—None.

*Color*.—Varies from 10YR 6/6 to 10YR 5/6 when dry.

**Kernel:**

*Size*.—Small to medium. Average length 7.3 mm. Average width 5.0 mm. Average depth 3.7 mm.

*Form*.—Ovoid.

*Viability*.—Viable, complete embryo development.

*Skin color*.—Varies from 7.5Y 9/2 to 5Y 8/4.

**Use:** Dessert.

*Market*.—Local and long distance.

**Keeping quality:** Good, held firm in cold storage for 2 weeks at 38° to 42° F. without shriveling, internal breakdown of flesh or appreciable loss of eating quality.

**Shipping quality:** Good, showed minimal skin scarring or flesh bruising during picking, packing and shipping trials.

**Plant/fruit disease resistance/susceptibility:** No specific testing for relative plant/fruit disease resistance/susceptibility has been designed. Under close observation during planting, growing and harvesting of fruit, under normal cultural and growing conditions near Modesto, Calif., no particular plant/fruit disease resistance or susceptibility has been observed. Any variety observed during indexing of plant characteristics with abnormal fungus, bacterial, virus or insect susceptibility is destroyed and eliminated from our breeding program. No atypical resistances/susceptibilities have been noted under normal cultural practices.

The present new variety of cherry tree, its flowers foliage and fruit herein described may vary in slight detail due to climate, soil conditions and cultural practices under which the variety may be grown. The present description is that of the variety grown under the ecological conditions prevailing near Modesto, Calif.

It is claimed:

1. A new and distinct variety of cherry tree (*Prunus avium*), substantially as illustrated and described.

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