

Sweet Scarlet and Thomcord – Two New Table Grape Varieties Released from ARS

TWO NEW TABLE GRAPE VARIETIES have recently been released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's chief scientific research agency, Agricultural Research Service (ARS). Sweet Scarlet (released 6/4/04) and Thomcord (released 9/11/03) were both developed by ARS horticulturist David W. Ramming and technician Ronald E. Tarailo at the Postharvest Quality and Genetics Research Unit, located in central California at the ARS San Joaquin Valley Agricultural Sciences Center in Parlier. These varieties join a series of top-quality red, white and black seedless grapes developed by this expert team.

Sweet Scarlet is a sweet, colorful red seedless grape with crisp flesh and a light, pleasant, muscat flavor. It ripens with Ruby Seedless, about the fourth week in August, in Fresno, California. The clusters are large in size (3.7 pounds) and length. The fruit retained its firmness and muscat flavor during two months of storage.

Embryo rescue was used to create Sweet Scarlet from a cross of two ARS-developed parent seedless grapes (C33-30 X C103-41). C33-30 and C103-41 are complex hybrids whose parents include Blackrose, Maraville, Tafafihi Ahmur, Divizich Early, Fresno Seedless, Italia, Calmeria, Muscat of Alexandria, Agadia, Muscat Hamburg, Perlette, Flame Seedless, Autumn Seedless and Sultanina. Sweet Scarlet has been tested in the San Joaquin Valley of California.

The California Table Grape Commission in Fresno, California, is the exclusive licensee for Sweet Scarlet, handling its distribution to nurseries. Two Sweet Scarlet vines were planted in the foundation block at FPS in 2000. After these vines are professionally identified for variety correctness, they will be assigned California Foundation Stock status. Sweet Scarlet propagation material from the FPS foundation block is only distributed to nurseries sub-licensed by the California Table Grape Commission.

Thomcord is a Concord-flavored blue-black seedless table grape that ripens mid-season. It is the result of the cross Thompson seedless X Concord made in 1983. Embryo rescue procedures were used to make the plants from Thompson seedless. The clusters average $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds, are conical in shape with a small wing, and medium to slightly loose in tightness. The fruit has a pleasing Concord flavor although not as strong as Concord. The skin is of medium thickness, not as tough as Concord and adheres to the flesh.

This variety is tolerant but not resistant to powdery mildew. It is productive and has produced 13-16 kg. per vine on bilateral-trained, spur-pruned vines. The fruit has been well received in farmers markets and could compete with Concord and Niabell in eastern states.

Thomcord is a public variety that may be distributed and propagated without restriction. Several mother vines with California Foundation Stock status are planted in the foundation block at FPS. FPS is now accepting orders for Thomcord mist-propagated plants and limited quantities of dormant wood. 🍇



Clusters of Sweet Scarlet, above, and Thomcord, below, on the vines at Foundation Plant Services.

