

Go to...

Cosmic cousin still growing

Growers, industry build the WA 2 program with little fanfare so far.

January 15th 2021 Issue

Ross Courtney // Jan 19, 2021



Bennett Mayo, manager of Mike and Brian's Nursery in Wapato, Washington, demonstrates labeling WA 2 scion trees with state certification tags in December. The WA 2 is on a path of commercial growth less ambitious than its

more famous cousin, the WA 38.



(Ross Courtney/Good Fruit Grower)

In a Yakima Valley nursery in December, tiny buds protruded through the frost on some 25,000 grafted trees destined for delivery in the spring of 2022, only to Washington growers.

But those buds aren't WA 38, which produces the famed fruit marketed as Cosmic Crisp, destined to blast the global apple market with 10.5 million boxes by 2022.

These trees are WA 2— a Splendour-Gala cross from Washington State University's apple breeding program — and produce an apple that offers its own distinctive characteristics and a growing production projection. Don't forget about it, said Bennett Mayo, manager of Mike and Brian's Nursery near Wapato, Washington.

"It is worthy of more attention than it has gotten so far," he said.

And more attention may be on the way. The WA 2 sells under two names by different marketing programs. One group of producers calls it Crimson Delight, while another has dubbed it Sunrise Magic. Either way, the apple is licensed in North America only to Washington growers and has reached commercial sales with volume expected to rise rapidly in the coming years.

Packer CPC International of Tieton has a small volume of the 2020 harvest for shipment this year, said Kevin Brandt, vice president of Proprietary Variety Management, or PVM, the Yakima, Washington, company contracted by WSU to manage the commercial release of the Sunrise Magic and the Cosmic Crisp. All Washington companies licensed to ship Cosmic Crisp may also pack Sunrise Magic, Brandt said.



Bennett Mayo



Tiny WA 2 buds, which Mayo rubbed free from hoarfrost, and the Geneva 11 rootstocks on which they grow will become 2022 finished tree deliveries.



(Ross Courtney/Good Fruit Grower)

PVM estimates 50,000 boxes of Sunrise Magic in 2021, 210,000 boxes in 2022 and just over 1 million by 2025. In contrast, PVM expects Washington packers to ship 10.5 million boxes of Cosmic Crisp by 2022.

To date, nurseries have sold nearly 500,000 WA 2 trees, more than half of them in 2020, Brandt said. Growers expect to add another 300,000 trees this year and again next year.

The Sunrise Magic joins a crowded apple market, but Brandt likes its chances. PVM plans a similar, if smaller, marketing campaign as for the Cosmic Crisp, which attempts to communicate directly with consumers. It won't receive the same media attention as the Cosmic, but it's a different apple and can succeed with a smaller splash.

"I think there's a good chance that Sunrise Magic can find its place in the markets," he said.

PVM's figures do not include WA 2 trees or production from Keller Fruit, a Yakima-based company that markets the apple as

Related:



WSU's Sunrise Magic relaunch may conflict with Crimson Delight

Crimson Delight. In the 2015–2016 season, Keller Fruit packed about 500 bins of Crimson Delight and had anticipated expanding.

The industry ended up with two names for the same apple years ago after a licensing dispute. WSU released the apple in 2011 without a trademarked name and allowed some growers who participated in field trials to continue growing and marketing. Later, after WSU contracted PVM, the university rebranded the apple as Sunrise Magic and prevented any new growers from joining Keller’s company.

Keller and WSU have ongoing lawsuits over the issue.

Regardless of the name of the apple, the trees keep growing.

Mike and Brian’s in Wapato sold WA 2 in 2018 and 2019 but didn’t receive orders in 2020, Mayo said. Nursery sales in general took a dip in 2020.

“And because of the uncertainty in apple prices, a new variety that is kind of unproven is not really enticing,” Mayo said.

However, he believes WA 2 will catch on. It is a high-quality apple, good enough to stand out in the industry’s era of designer varieties, he said.

“The WA 2 is a quality enough piece of fruit that it could maintain a hold in the market even in the midst of all the other, however many, 30 or more commercially viable fruit varieties there are,” Mayo said. •

—by Ross Courtney

Related:



Variety debate

Related:



WA 2 legal battles escalate

Share via:



January 19th, 2021 | Apples, January 15th 2021 Issue, Marketing, Ross Courtney

About the Author: Ross Courtney



Ross Courtney is an associate editor for Good Fruit Grower, writing articles and taking photos for the print magazine and website. He has a degree from Pacific Lutheran University. -- **Follow the author** -- Contact: 509-930-8798 or **email**.

Related Posts



2021 Cherry Institute spotlights Northwest cherry successes

January 21st, 2021 | 0
Comments



Packers dwarfed but not disadvantaged

January 21st, 2021 | 0
Comments



Ohio Apples rebrands as Fresh Forward

January 20th, 2021 | 0
Comments

Leave A Comment

Save my name, email, and website in this browser for the next time I comment.

ADVERTISEMENT

LATEST UPDATES



2021 Cherry Institute spotlights Northwest cherry successes

January 21st, 2021



Ohio Apples rebrands as Fresh Forward

January 20th, 2021

[MORE UPDATES](#)

EVENTS CALENDAR

Upcoming Events

January 18 - January 22

WSU Tree Fruit Days

January 26 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm PST

PEAR COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS

January 27

Apple Horticulture/Postharvest Research Review

[View All Events](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

Stay Up-to-Date with Industry News!

Get *Good Fruit Grower* magazine

delivered to your door.

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR MAGAZINE

SIGN UP FOR OUR FREE
E-FLASH NEWSLETTER

[Meet the Team](#) | [Resources](#) | [Buyer's Guide](#) | [Subscribe To Good Fruit Grower](#) | [Advertise with us!](#) | [Media Library](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Stay Up-To-Date With eFlash

Receive updates from *Good Fruit Grower's* weekly newsletter.

Sign up to receive our free eFlash with the latest news from the tree fruit and wine grape industries.

Sign Up

View Our Archives

Dig into *Good Fruit Grower's* online content.

Use the search box to find a topic of interest, explore articles by topic or category in the main navigation links on every page, or view articles by issue on our Archives page.

Archives by Issue

Upcoming Events

- January 18 - January 22
WSU Tree Fruit Days
- January 26 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm PST
PEAR COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS

View All Events

Receive Our Print Publication

Order now by [visiting our online subscription department](#), or by calling circulation at (509) 853-3515!

- Serving growers since 1946
- Trusted industry resources
- Award-winning editorial content

[Subscribe Now](#)

Copyright © 2021 Washington State Fruit Commission. All rights reserved. [Privacy Policy](#)