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Promising new pears

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Prior to 1882 the writer—in common with all experienced orchardists—believed that pear growing would never prove profitable on the great prairies west of Lake Michigan.

The varieties from southwest Europe, and their American grown seedlings, had failed with us as completely as had the strawberries, raspberries, and grapes from that source, and our available periodicals and books made no mention of successful pear growing on the great steppes of east Europe and central Asia.

Hence we were utterly surprised to find healthy pear orchards, loaded with fine pears, in the parts of south central Russia where our native Black Locust winter kills as the common peach does with us, and we were still more surprised to find the pear used as a street tree at points on the Upper Volga where the Duchess apple will not endure the winters, and where with scanty snow falls the thermometer often goes down to fifty or more degrees below zero.

We at once decided that the varieties doing well in the black soil section of south central Russia should do well in central Iowa and up to the 44th parallel, and that some of the varieties found in the home of the Duchess, and as far north as Kazan, should succeed on hardy roots in Minnesota and central Dakota. At first we were not successful in trying to import scions from the mossless sections of central Russia, as packed in leaves or straw, they were dry enough to burn on their arrival. But our success was much better in securing scions from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vilna, Riga, and other points nearer the coast where moss was used in packing. This—as with the coast varieties of the apple—resulted in the trial of a number of varieties, which have failed to endure the heat and drouth of our summers. But some of the sorts proved to be strays from the interior provinces, and later we have been able to secure scions from the interior region where dent corn, melons, and tomatoes ripen perfectly. As
the recent trying winters and summers have been peculiarly favorable for sifting the list we are now able to send out to our trial stations a few varieties of great promise for culture over a large portion of the great northwest.

In sending them out we are pleased to receive a statement to as the character of the soil on which they are to be planted, as in their native home some of them have been grown for centuries on sandy soil, some on clay, and some on the black drift soil like that of our prairies, and we find they do best here on the kind of soil on which they originated.

I append notes on some of the varieties we are propagating mainly at this time.

BESSEMIANKA. (No. 508 and 3m.)

This is grown on a great variety of soils in Russia, and it does well here on about all soils except the Black muck, upon which even the small fruits will not do well.

On dry soils, where it can be planted deeply to protect the tender seedling roots on which we are compelled to graft all our varieties, it is doing well up to the 44th parallel.

The fruit is medium in size, Bergamot shaped, and nearly or quite seedless. The flesh is tender, juicy, mildly sub acid, almost buttery, and very satisfactory for dessert use. Season September.

The tree is a rapid upright grower, with bright green foliage always free from rust or mildew. So far it has not proven more subject to blight than the Duchess apple.

LIMBER TWIG. (No. 513 and 14m.)

This has proven fully as hardy as the above, but it succeeds best on dry upland soil in airy situations.

The fruit is some larger than Bessemianka but about the same in quality and season.

GAKOVSKA. (No. 347.)

I wish to call special attention to this variety as it appears to be hardy enough to plant as a street tree even in north Iowa. In no case have I heard of injury of the trees by winters cold or summers heat. Our original trees, root grafted on the apple have been cut back for buds in summer, and
scions in autumn, since they were one year old, yet after our recent severe seasons, they made a growth of from three to five feet during the rainless summer of 1887, and the past summer they have done fully as well.

The fruit is large and handsome, but is mainly valuable for culinary use for which it is not excelled. Though pleasant in flavor the flesh is too firm for dessert use until overripe.

AUTumn BERGAMOT. (No. 122.)

This grades in hardiness of tree with Bessemianka, and it is a fine upright grower in nursery and orchard. As yet it has shown no trace of blight on our grounds, or at our trial stations so far as heard from.

It comes into bearing early, hence it has been fruited here and at several of our stations. Fruit small to medium, nearly sweet, very juicy, and would be classed good for dessert use even in California.

KURSKAYA. (No. 392.)

This was first introduced by the Mennomites near Windom, Minnesota, where sound bearing trees of considerable size are now to be found. We have not known its wood colored by cold or its foliage injured by heat, rust or blight.

The fruit is Bergamot shaped, medium in size, and is reported by Dr. Shroeder of Moscow, to be good in quality. As yet I have not tested its fruit picked at a proper season.

VICTORINA. (No. 361 and 106 vor.)

This is a fine hardy tree free from blight or sun scald. It has not yet been fruited here so far as I know, but Dr. Fischer of Voronesh—a careful German pomologist—gives it two stars for productiveness and quality.

EARLY BERGAMOT. (No. 418 and 103 vor.)

A fine upright tree ranking in hardiness with the Wealthy apple, and on dry upland soils we believe it to be hardier than the latter.

An excellent early summer variety larger in size and better in quality than the summer Bergamot grown, up to the recent hard winters, in Wisconsin.
FLAT BERGAMOT. (No. 396.)

About like the above in hardiness of tree and quality of fruit but six weeks later in season.

WINTER PEAR. (9m.)

We have favorable reports so far from all sources as to the hardiness of the tree and its freedom from blight. As we saw and tested the fruit in central Russia it was in season the last days of September. Fruit larger than Bessemianka and quite as good in quality.

MEDVIEDEVKA. (107 vor.)

A good hardy tree in all respects. We know nothing of its fruit except its large size as seen in a green state at Warsaw in Poland, and Dr. Fischer of Voronesh in central Russia, gives it two stars for productiveness and quality.

(15) OREL.

This is a good tree for which we have no name and as yet know nothing as to its fruit.

DULA. (4m.)

This seems to be of Chinese origin as indicated by its thick, glossy leaves and its peculiar wood and buds. Dr. Shroeder says it is only valuable for culinary use.

SACHARINE (12 m.)

This appears to be identical with the Zucker Birn (sugar pear) of south Russia and northeast Germany. It appears to be fully as hardy as the Wealthy apple, and has shown no trace of blight. The fruit is said to be excellent in quality.

LEMON. (5'6 and 7m.)

A very hardy tree which Dr. Shroeder says is best for cooking. I have not seen the fruit except in a green state.
CHINESE PEARS.

On the college grounds all the varieties of Chinese origin found in the eastern nurseries have proven tender. No. 1404, a snow pear sent out by Ellwanger & Barry, has proven hardy enough for profitable growing south of the 42nd parallel, but its fruit has little value on account of its small size and gritty texture.

We also have on trial and hear good reports from two varieties of the Chinese snow pear we imported from the old nursery at Metz, Germany. We received them as number 1405 and Chinese de Engery. Simon Louis of Metz reports the fruit the largest in size and the best in quality of the Chinese varieties he has fruited. So far the trees seem to be as hardy on our grounds as the box elder and their large handsome leaves are always perfect.

The terms on which we send out hardy trees for trial are given in a circular letter sent to all applicants.