

Strawberry lovers: Check out Purple Wonder

Cornell University

Cornell's newest and darkest strawberry variety -- Purple Wonder -- will make its debut at the Philadelphia International Flower Show March 5 through an exclusive licensing agreement with seed giant W. Atlee Burpee Co.

"Purple Wonder is sweet and aromatic, with outstanding strawberry flavor," said Courtney Weber, Cornell small fruits breeder and associate professor of horticulture. "But the color is something you won't be able to find in any grocery store."

The medium-sized berries turn from creamy white to red before ripening into an intense burgundy.

"The color develops all the way through the fruit, which might surprise consumers accustomed to supermarket fruit with color mostly on the surface," said Weber. "And letting the fruit ripen on the plant just makes the berries sweeter."

The berries and their purple juice can also be used to produce deep colored preserves and strawberry wine, and Purple Wonder's high antioxidant content gives them a healthy boost.

Burpee's lead horticulturist, Grace Romero, approached Weber last March, seeking something new and different to offer to home berry growers. The variety was market-ready, having been selected by Weber in 1999 and evaluated by growers in New York, Michigan and Illinois. Weber hopes Burpee will help Purple Wonder find its niche in backyard plots and patio pots.

Because the plants do not produce many runners, they are particularly appropriate for container gardening. Hardy enough for central New York, Purple Wonder should do well across temperate areas in the United States. Weber cautions that we are not the only mammals who find the fruit irresistible: squirrels and chipmunks have a taste for them, too.

According to Jessica Lyga, plant varieties and germplasm licensing associate for the Cornell Center for Technology Enterprise and Commercialization, a plant patent will be filed later this year.

Purple Wonder is the 42nd strawberry variety released by the Cornell small-fruits breeding program. Other recent releases include the Herriot strawberry, a high-yielding midseason variety, and the Crimson Giant raspberry, suitable for high tunnel cropping systems and November harvest.

Weber breeds for adaptation to the temperate climates of the Northeast and Midwest as well as disease and insect resistance, but readily admits that good flavor is the ultimate criteria.

Strawberry lovers: Check out Purple Wonder

Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

"Let's face it: Berries often get eaten on the way home from the farmers market," he said.

Berries will be available for tasting at Weber's field days during the summer, and gardeners interested in Purple Wonder can purchase plants from Burpee (<http://www.burpee.com> [1], 800-888-1447).

Amanda Garris is a freelance writer in Geneva, N.Y.

[SOURCE](#) [2]

Source URL (retrieved on 08/27/2014 - 7:30am):

<http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2012/03/strawberry-lovers-check-out-purple-wonder>

Links:

[1] <http://www.burpee.com>

[2] <http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/March12/PurpleStrawberry.html>