

'D'Artagnan' Sour Cherry, New for 2021 *By Bob Bors*

Released on the 100th anniversary of Horticulture
at the University of Saskatchewan



History D'Artagnan is closely related to most of the Romance cherries having the same parents as Juliet, Valentine, and Crimson Passion. We had saved 20 other selections from that era of breeding in case there was something special to consider at a later date. When the Romance series was released, most fruit growers were using upright harvesting machines that fit better with plants that have fewer suckers. All sour cherries sucker but the romance series had much less. By 2010, the largest Saskatoon growers started to use sideways harvesters which had the advantage of bending branches over conveyor belt and the fruit only had to drop a few inches compared to 3 to 6 feet drops using upright harvesters. This difference results in far less damage to fruit during the harvesting process. With our sideways Harvester we found that we had to do regular pruning of the romance series to preferentially get rid of thicker branches and only keep smaller flexible ones. Of all the 20 selections and the romance series, d'Artagnan is the easiest variety to maintain needing far less pruning.



Description

While this is the best cherry variety of ours for sideways harvesters, it is also the best variety for homeowners that want a hedge of cherries.

D'Artagnan suckers more frequently than the Romance series. Since the plant is on its own roots, the suckers it produces will have high quality fruit just like the original plant. In a few years it can fill in the row and becomes a hedge of thin flexible branches. It needs far less pruning than other varieties. Only when the plants got about 12 years old did we feel the need to start thinning out older branches. Most of the other varieties needed pruning when 7 years old. Over the 15 years of our trial, D'Artagnan has been shown to be the most consistent variety for production, beating out Carmine Jewel for overcoming harsh winters.

D'Artagnan is shorter than most of the romance series. For us, it gets about 6 feet tall while most of the romance series eventually gets 8 or 9 feet tall. It has burgundy coloured fruit with flavour similar to Valentine and Juliet. Most years it ripens in early August in Saskatoon.

To form a hedge, plant them about 1 m apart in a row. The row should be about a metre wide and mulch the area so there is no grass or weed competition. For a few years the plants will be individuals. When suckers begin to appear between the plants, don't remove them just let them grow up to fill in the rows.

For more information on the care of University of Saskatchewan cherries, download "Growing and Using University of Saskatchewan Sour Cherries" from www.fruit.usask.ca.