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W. A. Schoenfeld, Director
Corvallis

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THE PRITCHARD TOMATO

by

A. G. B. Bouquet

This newly introduced variety was formerly called the Scarlet Topper, but since the death of its breeder, F. J. Pritchard, of the U.S.D.A., the variety has been and will continue to be known as the Pritchard, or sometimes synonymously called Pritchard's Scarlet Topper. While this variety was first bred in 1926, it was not until 1932 that it was generally introduced to the trade.

The Pritchard is a cross of Marglobe on Cooper Special and as such combines the qualities of both varieties. In some respects, however, some of the undesirable characters of the parents are not apparent for whereas Marglobe has a tendency to show considerable cracking about the stem, the Pritchard is comparatively free from this tendency.

The female parent, Cooper Special, is a mid-season, "self-topping" variety which is largely used for shipping purposes. It has a comparatively short vine growth with heavy leaves and the fruits are of medium size, globe shaped, scarlet red, smooth, solid, free from cracks and borne in clusters of five. The paternal or pollen parent of the Pritchard, namely the Marglobe, is well known to most tomato growers. It is valuable chiefly because of its smoothness, good globular shape, deep scarlet color and thick interior walls. It is quite susceptible to cracking about the stem, however, particularly in areas where there is considerable fall rain.

A more or less technical description of the Pritchard tomato is as follows: Plant medium size, having height of 18-20 inches and a spread of 4 to 4 1/2 feet; growth compact and more or less determinate; branches many, stout, short, internodes short; leaves large, bright green, well shading fruit. Fruit medium size, 4 1/2 to 6 ounces, uniform, globular, slightly flattened, horizontal cross-section round, smooth, cavity shallow and smooth, but with very shallow sutures or creases radiating from the stem; styler scar small, regular; color scarlet, ripening evenly about stem. Flesh walls thick, firm, juicy, evenly colored; core comparatively small, fleshy; flavor mildly acid. Season, ripening soon after Earliana and continuing to bear well into fall months. Valuable for home garden, market garden (as second early and main crop), shipping and canning.

In general, it may be said that the Pritchard is a moderately heavily productive variety, bearing scarlet fruit that is medium large, smooth, globular and solid. The plant is comparatively determinate or "self-topping" in habit, so that it does not extend widely over the ground, thus making possible closer setting than for other more vigorous indeterminate varieties. It is especially valuable in its uniform production of smooth fruits and in the large percentage of Number 1 grade fruits borne per plant. It ranks quite early in season of ripening. In the Station grounds at Corvallis and in several commercial gardens it has produced fruit as early as Bonny Best but of greater firmness and solidity.

Seed of the Pritchard tomato is quite well distributed at the present time and is available from most of the larger seed companies.

Additional Literature
pertaining to the Pritchard tomato and tomato growing

- Porte, W. S. The Pritchard tomato. U.S.D.A. Circ. No. 243. Washington, D.C.
- Beattie, W. R. Tomatoes as a Truck Crop. U.S.D.A. Farmers Bul. No. 1338
- Parsons, F. E. Preparation of Fresh Tomatoes for Market. U.S.D.A. Farmers Bul. No. 1291.
- Bouquet, A. G. B. Growing and Marketing Tomatoes. Oregon State College Extension Service Circ. 263. Corvallis, Oregon.
- Bouquet, A. G. B. The Use of Ethylene Gas in Ripening Tomatoes. Oregon Experiment Station Circ. of Information No. 72.