

Gold Nugget - A Seedless, Late-Maturing Mandarin Cultivar

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The University of California has released a new mandarin (tangerine) cultivar named 'Gold Nugget'. 'Gold Nugget' mandarin is a seedless mid- to late-season mandarin (or tangerine) developed at the University of California, Riverside. 'Gold Nugget' is a hybrid of 'Wilking' x 'Kincy' parentage. It was first selected in 1975 by R. K. Soost and J. W. Cameron. During much of its evaluation, this hybrid was called "Pixie-like" because of its similarities to the 'Pixie' cultivar. The name 'Gold Nugget' was selected as descriptive of the external appearance of the fruit.

Description

'Gold Nugget' is consistently seedless in mixed plantings with a wide variety of other citrus cultivars, including mandarins, pummelos, and oranges. The fruit has a rich, sweet taste and bright orange rind at maturity. The fruit (Fig. 1) are slightly flat, about 2 in. (55 - 60 mm) high and 2.5 in. (60 - 70 mm) in diameter, and weigh 2.5 - 5.3 oz. (70 - 150 g). Younger trees tend to have larger fruit than older trees, but it is likely that the size of fruit on older trees can be increased by pruning or thinning. In Riverside and the San Joaquin Valley of California, fruit reach maturity in January or February and hold well on the tree with little granulation into April or even June in some years. Early in the season, fruit may develop rind color and an acceptable solids:acids ratio but still have a juice percentage too low for acceptable eating quality. Rind color changes from green to bright orange between December 15 and January 10 in most years. Rinds tend to be coarse, particularly on young trees. The rind is of medium thickness, about 4 - 5 mm. The fruit peels fairly easily. At most trial locations, total soluble solids ranged from 13.5% to 16% between December and May. Acid content is about 0.80% in February and declines to about 0.60% by May. The tree is a medium size and moderately vigorous (4- to 5-year-old trees are about 8 feet tall) with a fairly upright shape. Like most mandarins, it is prone to alternate bearing. Crop ratings suggest that trees are productive in most locations, except in the Coachella Valley, where yields and fruit quality have varied greatly over the years. At present, we do not have sufficient data to make specific recommendations on planting this variety in the desert. In some years, blossom end splitting is a problem and can lead to moderate crop loss, particularly if fruit are held into March or later. The major advantage of 'Gold Nugget' over other mandarin cultivars is that it combines seedlessness and excellent flavor with late maturity and the ability to hold well on the tree. No other commercial mandarin cultivar combines these attributes.

Culture

Trees grow well on Carrizo, Troyer, trifoliolate, C35, Swingle, and Schaub rough lemon rootstocks, but longevity and long-term productivity of trees on these and other rootstocks have not been evaluated. As with other mandarins, buds push better during the spring than in the fall unless a heated greenhouse is used. Tree growth is generally vigorous with normal cultural practices. The upright growth habit of this tree suggests that 'Gold Nugget' is suitable for high-density planting (200 - 400 trees/acre). It is not known if the variety will be productive in large solid-block plantings where no pollinizer is available. We do not recommend planting this variety in isolated blocks until its pollination requirement is more fully understood. Pollen viability, estimated by germinating pollen on agar plates, was 23%. Thus, this cultivar may cause moderate levels of seediness in compatible cultivars.

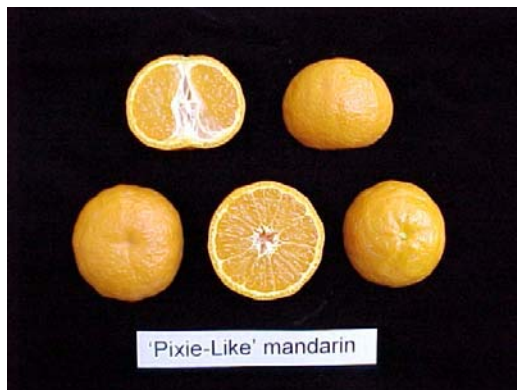


Figure 1. The "Gold-Nugget" mandarin originally called "Pixie-Like".