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EVALUATION OF SOME PEACH CULTIVARS IN THE GENOTYPE COLLECTION OF RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF HORTICULTURE IN SKIERNIEWICE, POLAND

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Peach production in Poland is not as popular as apple production. Poland ranks leading place in the EU in terms of apple production, recently averaging 3.2-3.5 million tons, while 15-25 thousand tons of peaches can be produced in good seasons only. However, average peach production has been increasing in recent years with the renovation of orchards, introduction of new cultivars and the establishment of more efficient planting systems.

Generally, the climate in Poland is not favourable to peach production. Winters are long and cold, and in the majority of winter seasons temperatures from -15 to -25°C can be expected. In addition, frost/freeze events during blossom in the spring very often limit the fruitlet formation and yielding of peach trees. Therefore, not all peach cultivars grow well and produce good crops in these conditions. To increase orchard productivity and efficiency, fruit growers are looking for solutions mainly in the form of new cultivars that are more resistant to winter cold and spring frost damage, bacterial and fungal cankers, fungal diseases, and they expect first of all very high yields of high quality fruits.

The peach field collection in the possession of the Research Institute of Horticulture in Skierniewice, Poland, is not as rich as those in the countries of Southern Europe well-known for peach production. Over 150 cultivars, selections and seedlings of peaches and nectarines are now being evaluated in the collection planted in 1995. The collection is main source of information on peach varieties value for Polish fruit growers because no additional experiments in this matter are realized. The paper presents pomological characteristics of 14 high fruit quality foreign cultivars: 'Maycrest', 'Manon', 'Harrow Diamond', 'Dixired', 'Early Redhaven', 'Royal Glory', 'Diamond Princess', 'Redhaven', 'Jerseyland', 'Flamin Fury P.F. 27A', 'Madison', 'Amgold', 'Summer Lady', 'Fidelia', 'Elberta' which on base of multiyear observations well tolerated changeable climate of Poland.

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