

MANDARINS: Tahoe Gold

FRUIT DESCRIPTION: Seedless (0-3 seeds/fruit). Oblate shape, but less oblate than other TDE selections. 2.25 to 3.00 inches in diameter equates to a Large to Mammoth size designation. Rind has a deep orange to reddish-orange color, smooth texture and medium-thin thickness. Easy to peel. Internally the deep orange colored flesh has a medium-fine texture, is seedless in mixed plantings, juicy and has a medium to medium-large hollow core at maturity. The rich, sweet and distinctive flavor is similar to its Temple and Dancy parentage and has medium-low to moderate acid levels. This may be the best tasting TDE selection.

TREE DESCRIPTION: Round shape with moderately vigorous growth habit and thorny branches. Sets medium to medium-heavy crop and alternate bearing seems to be less of a problem than in the other TDE selections. Large, spreading tree if not pruned regularly. Irregular pruning could be detrimental to production as the alternate bearing would become more severe. Alternate bearing tendencies may be alleviated with management techniques, scheduled harvesting and annual pruning.

HARVEST SEASON: Mid-November to May

PROS: Large, attractive deep orange colored fruit is seedless, oblate in shape and has a rich, sweet flavor. Good production. Fruit smaller than other TDE selections. Fruit holds well on the tree with slight to moderate puffing after peak maturity. It is the earliest TDE selection to mature. Can be grown in all citrus regions of California. Seedless when grown in mixed plantings. Tree canopy protects the fruit on trees grown in the desert from severe sunburn.

CONS: Alternate bearing is a characteristic of most mandarin selections, but Tahoe Gold seems to be less influenced by this condition. Should this become an issue, harvesting on schedule, fruit thinning, not holding the fruit too long and annual pruning may help manage this problem. Slight to moderate puffing late in the season gives the rind a slightly bumpy texture.

COMPATABLE ROOTSTOCKS: Carrizo, C-35 Citrange, Trifoliates

RECOMMENDED SPACINGS:

Traditional: 15'-17'x 18', 15'-17'x 20', 16'x 18', 18'x 18', 16'x 20'

Double Planting Standard Rootstock: 8'x 18', 9'x 18', 8'x 20'

C-35: 14'x 18', 16'x 18'

Double Planting C-35 Citrange: 7'x 18', 8'x 18'

HISTORY: Tahoe Gold is one of the results of an ambitious breeding program being conducted by the University of California at Riverside in an attempt to develop seedless mandarin fruit. Tahoe Gold is a triploid hybrid that combines the best qualities of Temple Tangor, Dancy Mandarin and Encore Mandarin together to make a very promising early to mid season seedless mandarin that is attractive, flavorful and has good size. It was planted at the U.C.R. Lindcove Field Station in 1992 for observation and evaluation and annual fruit data has been available since 1995.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS: Tahoe Gold differs from the other TDE selections in that it ripens earlier, has smaller fruit size, better flavor and a higher juice content. Fruit sizes are slightly larger in the desert regions. Tahoe Gold is juicier than Gold Nugget and is as large as or larger than most mandarin varieties. Fruit color breaks in early to mid- November in the desert citrus regions and in mid-December in inland valleys and coastal areas. Tree spacing is similar to what is being used with Clementine and Satsuma mandarins even though it has a spreading growth habit. Close spacing is recommended because of the pruning required to help alleviate the alternate bearing tendencies. Pruning should begin in the 2nd or 3rd year before the tree becomes large and productive. It is best to begin the process early in its lifecycle and maintain it annually. Prune to create a compact tree with an open center while maintaining a protective crown. Pruning heavily going into a low-yield year can greatly improve production in that year. Lowering the height of the tree also reduces harvesting costs. Planting as close as close as Gold Nugget or W. Murcott (400 trees/acre) is not recommended. Fruit production does require bee pollination and may benefit from floral inductions. Many fruit are born per branch in a cluster creating an arrangement that could prove difficult in controlling Cottonycushion scale. Successful mandarin production requires management techniques, unique to the group, which must be accomplished throughout the season in order to insure the development of high quality fruit. These techniques include: spacing, culture, fruit set, pollination and pruning.