

NAVEL ORANGES: Thompson Improved

FRUIT: Seedless, slightly oval in shape, medium-large size, 3 inches plus diameter equates to 72 to 88 box count. Smooth medium with thin rind and a good orange color. Coarse, ricy flesh that appears granulated later in its season. Lower juice content.

TREE: Very compact growth habit. Less vigorous than the Parent Washington (Old Line).

HARVEST SEASON: Late October to November. It does not hold well and must be picked when ready. It matures 2 to 3 weeks before the Parent Washington.

PROS: One of the earliest navel varieties to test for sugar-acid ration and color break. It is durable fruit and ships well.

CONS: Coarse, ricy flesh with lower juice content. It granulates later in its season. It does not hold well and must be picked when ready. The fruit size decreases when tree becomes old.

COMPATIBLE ROOTSTOCKS: Carrizo, C-35 Citrange, Trifoliata, Citrumelos, Rough Lemon

RECOMMENDED SPACINGS:

Standard - 15'-17'x20', 20'x20'

Standard Double Planting – 8'x20', 10'x20'

C-35 – 16'x18', 18'x18'

C-35 Double Planting – 8'x18', 9'x18'

HISTORY: The original Thomson was one of the earliest selections to be made from Old Line Washington and originated as a limb sport in an orchard in Duarte, California and was named for and introduced by its owner A. C. Thomson around 1891. There were extensive plantings in California and around the world of this variety in its early years, due to its earlier maturity and attractive appearance. Years later after growers and marketers realized that the fruit quality was inferior to Old Line Washington, new plantings were discontinued and most acreage was converted over to Old Line or removed. The University of California Lindcove Research Center released disease-free propagating materials in 1990 under the name "Thomson Improved" (T.I.). It still had the same characteristics of the original Thomson and was thought to be of substandard quality prompting the University to withhold its release, because they didn't want to be instrumental in distributing and encouraging the production of an inferior variety.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS: Three strains available; Rush, Sheldon and Zimmerman. Zimmerman is more popular than Sheldon and Rush because of its early color break. All perform differently depending upon location and climate and saying one is better than the other may be difficult. It is popular in Tulare County because of its early testing.