



Burford's Redflesh

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I got a request to do a write-up on this redfleshed variety that was named for it's finder, famed Virginia orchardist Tom Burford. We were told that Tom found the variety in the 1970s at the homeplace of Patrick Henry's mother, in Amherst County, VA, and subsequently, began to propagate and disseminate it. The location of the tree isn't far from Clifford, VA, hence a pseudonym, 'Clifford.' A slightly alternate history, found in Dan Busey's 'Illustrated History of Apples in the United States and Canada' and elsewhere, states that the variety was actually discovered in the Burford Brothers Nursery in Monroe, VA that Tom ran with his sibling. They used Red Siberian crabapple as a rootstock, and the thinking is that it crossed with something to produce Burford's Redflesh. Too bad Tom isn't still here to ask for clarification on this apple's beginnings.

The fruit from Burford's Redflesh is primarily used for cider or cooking, and isn't great as a dessert apple (I think it tastes like cardboard myself, when eaten out of hand). However, it's more appealing than, say, Redfield, in that it isn't nearly as astringent, but it's definitely tart on the taste spectrum. We like to use it for drying, as well, since the gorgeous pink flesh translates well and the flavor is concentrated a bit more when dried -- although it's still not the most flavorful dried apple. It's also used for cooking and makes lovely pink applesauce. The fruit is medium to large in size, and the trees tend to set heavy crops annually and reliably. The flesh is coarse and dry, so the yield isn't great if you're using it for cider, but the color is, of course, very nice for making rose ciders or just adding a bit of color interest.

In the NC Piedmont, BR ripens in late August, but said to be a mid-fall apple elsewhere. It's one of the prettiest trees you'll ever see -- bright fuschia blooms in the springtime, gorgeous purple-bronze foliage all summer, then orange foliage in the fall. Like other redfleshed varieties, the wood is rosy, too, so would be very nice to use in woodturning or woodworking in general. Would make an awesome bonsai. We grow our BR on MM111 and 15 years in, the mature trees have stayed petite, topping out around 10 feet tall. As I've written in another thread, we have had issues with them becoming "budbound," as mature trees, putting out an excess of leaf and fruit buds, but unpredictable shoot growth, hence their smaller stature. However, this may be an issue unique to our orchard and derives from something beyond varietal tendencies. We tend to lose a lot of the crop to summer fruit rots, but that's not unusual across most varieties in our orchard. We protected our BR against the rots to great effect with Japanese apple bags last year.

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