

## Prune and Plum *Prunus domestica* L.

# Producing larger, tastier treats

A prune is simply a dried plum. UC Davis has released three promising prune varieties since its prune breeding program got underway in 1985.

In 1985, the California prune industry asked UC researchers Ted DeJong and James Doyle to start a traditional prune breeding program to try to develop new varieties that could extend the harvest season for the California prune industry. At that time the industry consisted of about 80,000 acres of a single variety — **Improved French**.

A year later, DeJong and Doyle started a program and two varieties have since been released for the dried prune industry — **Sutter** in 2000 and **Muir Beauty** in 2004. Both of these varieties produce fruit that is larger, tastier, and earlier maturing (by 7 to 14 days) than Improved French. Substantial acreage of Sutter has been planted and interest in Muir Beauty is growing.

A third variety derived from this program, **Tulare Giant**, produces a very large fruit and was released specifically for the fresh



Muir Beauty was released to the dried prune industry in 2004.

market that have an interesting array of fruit color, flavor, and quality characteristics. External fruit colors range from yellow and pink to completely blue or purple, and dried flavors have hints of apricot, cherry, and even cognac. Several new varieties are expected to be released in the next few years.



Extension county advisor position and is now co-managing the program with DeJong, while Sarah Bradley has taken over day-to-day operations of the program. This program receives substantial support from the California Dried Plum/Prune Board and many growers are routinely involved in evaluating advanced selections.

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market. It is currently the most popular fresh-market European plum grown in California.

The project is currently evaluating more than 80 advanced selections

Doyle retired from the university in 2000, the same year Carolyn DeBuse became involved with the prune breeding program. In 2007, DeBuse took a UC Cooperative