

Following is a copy of the web page describing the heirloom orchard program at the Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm and also descriptions of the heirloom varieties of fruit trees.

See Field Notes spring 2006 issue for a tribute to Barbara Zieschang, who not only established the heirloom orchard but shared her knowledge of herbs and plants at many farm events.

WALLACE ZIESCHANG MEMORIAL HEIRLOOM ORCHARD

The fruit trees in this orchard represent trees grown by area farm families in eastern Oklahoma and western Arkansas during the late 1800's and early 1900's.

This orchard is an outdoor classroom, where visitors can learn the importance of a family orchard, how to care for the trees, and how to harvest and use the abundant fruit.

Orchard History:

Wallace Zieschang and his wife, Barbara, were originally involved with the Overstreet-Kerr Farm through the Herb People Club. Wallace was always at Barbara's side in the herb beds, but his special interest was fruit trees. He looked forward to assisting the farm with the development of an heirloom orchard. Wallace and Barbara walked the area, sharing dreams about a "family" orchard, with low maintenance trees, to be used as an outdoor classroom for youth and adults.

Before his dream could be realized, on January 23, 1996, Wallace passed away. As family and friends gathered to mourn his death and celebrate his life, a decision was made to establish a memorial fund in memory of Wallace to which they could contribute. A fund was set up to help develop an heirloom orchard at the Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm. The first group of trees was ordered and planted in April of 1996 in the same location as the Overstreet orchard of 100 years ago. Barbara, her children, grandchildren, and friends now cherish memories of Wallace as they walk among the fruit trees in the Wallace Zieschang Memorial Heirloom Orchard.



Members of Wallace Zieschang family sampling the first-fruits of the heirloom orchard.

Original Contributors to the Orchard:

*Barbara Zieschang/Sallisaw, OK;
Chris Zieschang family/The Colony, TX;
Kim Zieschang family/Reston, VA;
Brian/Debra Frost family/Houston, TX;
Ernie/Darlene Zieschang/Liberty, TX;
Anne Saldanha/Buffalo, NY;
Jim Combs/Keota, OK;
Leleux Associates/Tulsa, OK;
Frank/Chris Agrusa/Sallisaw, OK;
Bureau of Labor Statistics/McLean, VA;
C. W. Matteck/Lake Jackson, TX;
Elizabeth Wold/Gore, OK;
Abraham-Horkley/Washington, D.C.;
Rita Holder/Choctaw, OK;
Vera Egermeier/Delaware, OK;
Steven/Marcia Piotter/Bartlesville, OK;
Kirk/Loretta Bowers/Hulbert, OK;
Sidney J. Grant/Angleton, TX.
Charles/Natalie Tolman/Heber Springs, AR;
Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture/Poteau, OK;*

Blue Ribbon Prune Plum (1)

A cultivator of the Stanley prune plum and introduced in 1926. It is one of the fattest, bluest, juiciest, sweetest prune-plums available. Tantalizing, firm, fine-grained, freestone plums ripen in August/September (a full month earlier than its parent, the Stanley prune plum) and can be used fresh, canned, or dried to make your own prunes.

Earliblue Prune Plum (2)

Is super hardy, and because it blooms late, unpredictable spring frosts won't hurt it. The tree is attractive, upright, and the fruit has an inviting, purple-blue skin and a sweet, tempting taste. Can be used for making preserves or for drying. Extremely easy-to-grow plum tree. Ripens in July.

Mirabelle Plum (3)

The Mirabelle was widely grown in Europe during the Middle Ages, especially in France. The fruit is prized for making jams, tarts, compotes, and for canning. The tree is medium-sized and produces small, round, yellow fruit with yellow dots. Mirabelle was introduced into the USA in the 1700's.

Ozark Premier Plum (4)

A juicy, yellow clingstone plum with a small pit and a mildly tart flavor. It is a vigorously productive, self-pollinating tree. Fruit ripens in late summer over an extended period of time. Discovered and developed in Mountain Grove, Missouri, it was introduced to this area in 1946.

Belle of Georgia Peach (5)

An old-time favorite, originating in China, this specimen was found in Georgia around 1870. The tree is very resistant to bacterial spot, and slightly resistant to brown rot. This tree ripens in early August, a large, creamy, white peach with a bright red cheek. The red-tinged freestone flesh has great flavor, and is excellent for eating fresh, desserts, and canning. A reliable producer and self-pollinator.

Contender Peach (6)

A yellow-fleshed, freestone peach which blooms late. Better after a long, cold winter. Developed at North Carolina State University, Contender is resistant to bacterial spot.

Elberta July Peach (7)

From the first Elberta discovered in Georgia in 1870. This selection is an improved variety that produces freestone fruit with sweet, bright red-skin and yellow flesh; freestone fruit. A very peachy taste and aroma, with virtually the smallest pit-to-fruit ratio of any other peach, it ripens in early August.

Montmorency Cherry (8)

A medium to large red fruit, it is the standard for pie cherries. The fruit ripens in late June. The tree grows to about 15 feet. Cold hardy, requires good drainage and aeration of the soil for proper root development. Montmorency originated in France and was introduced into the USA in 1760.

Arkansas Black Apple (9)

Medium-sized, smooth dark red fruit, nearly black at maturity. This fruit has a crisp, juicy, yellowish flesh which is good for cider blending, apple butters, or eating fresh. The fruit ripens in late October to November. A large vigorous tree, resistant to cedar-apple rust, and somewhat resistant to codling moth damage, this tree needs a pollinator; Yates or Yellow Delicious are compatible pollinators. This variety was found in Benton County, Arkansas around 1870.

Grimes Golden Apple (10)

Dates back to 1790 from West Virginia. A medium to large, roundish fruit with a tough, yellow with some russet skin. Pulp is aromatic, tender, crisp, highly flavored, juicy

yellowish-orange flesh.

Arkansaw Apple (11)

A founding in Arkansas in 1833, this tree is resistant to several diseases, and produces medium to large red fruit with crisp yellow flesh with good flavor.

Apple Folly (12)

The "Four In One Antique Apple" demonstrates grafting practices used many years ago. Each type of tree are of Victorian apple stock. This tree is a Golden Russet -medium sized golden brown w/ excellent sweet flavor. Yellow flesh for dessert & cider blend. Very old American variety. Scab resistant; Snow -this Canadian fruit has been cultivated since 1824. It is one of the oldest and most desirable, with red skin and snow-white flesh. Very cold hardy; Summer Rambo - discover in France in 1535, this large, firm, pale greenish-yellow flushed with red apple w/ a slightly sweet flavor was growing in America in 1767. This tree bears early, annually, and heavily; & Roxbury Russet -originated in the early 17th century in Massachusetts. It is likely the oldest type apple in America. Medium fruit w/ greenish brown skin and coarse flesh. An all purpose apple that ripens in late September. Larger and heavier producer than Golden Russett.

Orange Quince (13)

A deciduous thornless tree with a height of 13'-20' and width of 10'-15'. Originally from Asia, it reached its peak in the US in the 18th-19th century. Fruit is light, golden yellow, green, or orange and is pear shaped. Pulp is firm, aromatic, and has a gritty texture. Seeds are poison. Ripens in late autumn.

Keiffer Pear (14)

Hardy and vigorous, bearing dependable crops. Fruit is large, golden yellow with a crimson blush, crisp, juicy, coarse- textured white flesh. Renowned for canning and excellent for pear honey and preserves. Harvest fruit while firm and store wrapped in paper in a cool place. When the fruit gives slightly to pressure, it is sweet and ripe. Fruit is ready to harvest from mid-September to mid-October. The tree is practically immune to fire blight and is heat tolerant; Keiffer is a natural hybrid coming from Asia in 1873.