Lyrene

ORIGIN OF THE VARIETY

'Southmoon' originated as a seedling in 1981. The seed lot from which it was grown was produced by mixing the seeds produced when four tetraploid, low-chill highbush blueberry selections from the Florida breeding program ('Sharpblue', 'Fiordablu', 'Avonblue' and 'FL4-76') were hand pollinated in a greenhouse with pollen from another Florida highbush selection, FL80-46. FL80-46 was an F1 hybrid between FL73-8 (an improved highbush selection from the Florida breeding program), and a wild tetraploid V. corymbosum clone selected from the forests of Alachua County, FL. A superior plant, with dark fruit, the clone to which it was crossed to produce FL80-46 and the clones to which FL80-46 was crossed to obtain southmoon, were chosen for large fruit size and high fruit quality. All crosses were made in the blueberry greenhouse at the University of Florida. None of the plants involved was patented. 'Southmoon' was selected as a superior seedling in a high-density fruiting nursery in Gainesville, Fla. in 1985, and was given the test number FL85-15. The plant was propagated by softwood cuttings, and a test plot of 15 ramets was established at Gainesville in January, 1987. Other test plots were later established at several sites in north Florida using rooted cuttings. Observations over 10 years have indicated that 'Southmoon' has characteristics that would make it a useful cultivar.

ASEXUAL PROPAGATION OF THE VARIETY

The new and distinct variety has been propagated by softwood cuttings on numerous occasions. In every case, all the ramets have displayed the varietal characteristics without exception.

SUMMARY OF THE VARIETY

'Southmoon' is vigorous and produces an upright plant with a low chill requirement. Although its chromosome number has not been determined cytologically, both its pedigree and its crossing behavior mean January temperatur
Plant 9,834

harvest as well as immature fruit within the cluster, and further depicts the top and bottom surfaces of mature and new foliage of the plant.

DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIETY

The following is a detailed botanical description of the new and distinct variety of blueberry, its flowers, fruit and foliage, based on observations of specimens grown in Gainesville, Fla. Color descriptions, except those given in common terms, use terminology from "The Pantone Book of Color" 1990, by Leatrice Eiseman and Lawrence Herbert, Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, New York.

Bush:
Size.—Large; on good soil, plants reach 2 m tall with a canopy diameter of 130 cm within 6 years in north Florida. Rooted cuttings 12 cm tall transplanted to a field nursery on Sep. 25 averaged 80 cm tall the following July.
Vigor.—High.
Growth habit.—Upright.
Productivity.—High.
Flower bud production.—Moderately heavy.
Trunk:
Suckering tendency.—Below-average tendency to sprout new shoots from rhizomes. However, it does produce enough basal shoots to renew the bush. After several years of fruiting, plants require annual, post-harvest, summer pruning to maintain production of strong flowering wood.
Texture.—Bark on older trunks rough, but exfoliates to smooth.
Color.—Two-year old wood "Gravel" (PANTONE 14-1014).

Twigs:
Color.—Current-season twigs in August “Hay” (PANTONE 15-0636).
Internode length.—Averaged 1.43 cm on upright, regrowth shoots measured in July following hard January pruning.

Leaves:
size.—Medium. Average length 55 mm. Average width 25 mm.
Shape.—Ovate, apically acute.
Margin.—Entire.

Color of upper surface.—Green olive (PANTONE 17-0553).
Color of lower surface.—Beechnut (PANTONE 14-0425).
Pubescence, upper surface.—Glabrous except numerous short, white hairs on midrib visible at 30x.
Pubescence, lower surface.—A few stalked glands on midrib visible at 30x. Scattered pubescence on midrib and larger veins. Otherwise glabrous.
Pubescence, leaf margins.—Glands spaced among the margins of the petiolar half of the blade.

Flowers:
Size.—Medium.
Color.—White.
Shape.—Ureolate.
Pollen production.—Copious.
Flowering period.—Early: 50% anthesis averages Feb-
uary 27.
Inflorescence morphology.—Pedicel length medium and peduncle internode length medium, leading to a moderately loose fruit cluster.
Self compatibility.—Partially self compatible but must be cross-pollinated with another tetraploid cultivar for full productivity.

Berry:
Size.—Large, about 2.3 grams per berry
Shape.—Somewhat flattened; First-ripe berries 11 mm
tall and 15 mm diameter.
Color.—Cadet (PANTONE 18-3812).
Pedicel scar.—Small and dry.
Firmness.—Very firm.
Flavor.—Sweet with slight acidity.
Calyx lobes.—Small, irregular.
Calyx tube aperture.—Small diameter.
Texture.—Good: small seeds, thin skins, few sclerids.
Wax.—Moderately persistent.
Maturity date.—Early-midseason: Mid-harvest averages May 9 at Gainesville.
Clusters.—Normally 4 to 8 berries per peduncle.

I claim:
1. A new and distinct highbush blueberry plant, substantially as illustrated and described, characterized by its low chilling requirement, large fruit, high fruit quality, early ripening, and resistance to Phytophthora root rot and Botryosphaeria stem blight, having the ability to be asexually propagated by softwood cuttings.