

## New Veggie & Fruits Available

Over the last few years, I have noticed a few new types and varieties of produce available at local stores. Examples of this include jícama, Asian pear and popular mandarin orange varieties such as ‘Satsuma’ and ‘Clementine.’ It is very difficult to introduce new varieties and species of fruit to the general public for a number of reasons. However, it seems these are gaining acceptance.

**Jícama:** I first tried jícama several years ago at a super bowl party and became an instant fan. It is a root crop that was used by the Aztecs and introduced to European settlers and is popular in areas of Latin America. Jícama is usually eaten raw and has the texture of a crispy pear or water chestnut with a subtly sweet taste. It is a vegetable that can be eaten alone, dipped in salsa, used in salads or as an ingredient in stir-fries. Jícama, available in local stores, is grown in Mexico and from what I have found, probably cannot be grown in our area for food production.

**Asian pear:** This fruit is closely related to traditional or European pears. They are sometimes referred to as apple-pears due to the similar taste, but are not a cross of the two. However, it tends to contain more juice and have less of the gritty texture some pears have. Many cultivars exist, and the fruit can be grown locally. Many garden centers carry at least one variety. One called ‘Twentieth Century’ is especially common and has good flavor. Consult local nursery personnel for further recommendations if you wish to grow it. Asian pear is susceptible to fire blight, a potentially damaging disease, and measures should be taken to prevent it. For further information on fire blight, see the fact sheet at

<http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/factsheet/fire-blight-08.pdf>.

**Mandarin Orange:** Mandarin oranges, or tangerines, have been found in stores for quite awhile. Over the last few years, I have seen two varieties become quite common. They are ‘Satsuma’ and ‘Clementine.’ Both are easy to peel, seedless and have good flavor. It seems that the ‘Clementine’ variety is more commonly grown in California and ‘Satsuma’ is more common in the Southeastern United States. When I have traveled in the deep south during the winter months, ‘Satsuma’ Mandarin oranges are available at flea markets and fruit stands and are delicious. Interestingly, both varieties are self-fruitful, requiring no insect pollination. In fact, if bees happen to pollinate their flowers, the fruit will contain seeds.

Master Gardener classes will be starting February 11. These classes are for anyone interested in horticultural topics such as gardening, lawn care, soil management, fruit trees and many others. The series lasts for approximately 12 weeks of in-class instruction and other workshops on topics such as starting your own veggie seeds indoors, native and waterwise plants and an uncommon/rare tree tour of the USU campus. Registration is \$95. For further information, call 435-753-6263 or log onto [www.extension.usu.edu/cache/horticulture](http://www.extension.usu.edu/cache/horticulture). Class openings are also available in Box Elder and Franklin counties.

