

**Fire Blight Resistant Pears**  
**David Ulmer, M.D.**  
**Personal comments in italics (David Ulmer 2025)**

**USDA Pear Cultivars**

**Magness** - *One of the Ulmer family favorites!*

- Released in 1960 by the Beltsville, MD Agricultural Research Center.
- Excellent flavor and texture, similar to 'Comice'
- Almost immune to shoot and flower infection by fire blight. Trunk and scaffolds can be infected through wounds.
- Pollen-sterile; cannot be used as a pollinizer
- Matures in early September; keeps until December under refrigeration.

**Moonglow** - *I grew this variety in Mississippi. It did not blight, good flavor.*

- Released in 1960 by the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center.
- Good flavor – mild and subacid
- Highly resistant to fire blight
- Matures 7 days before 'Bartlett'

**Dawn** - *I have never planted this pear - Some have stated that fire blight resistance is minimal. It is very early ripening when we are enjoying stone fruit.*

- Released in 1960 by the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center.
- Excellent flavor and texture •Moderate resistance to fire blight.
- Early maturing – early August

**Potomac** – *Very productive. Excellent flavor. It ripens without refrigeration.*

- Released in 1993 by USDA-ARS-AFRS and The Ohio State University
- Aromatic sub-acid flavor - Buttery, juicy texture
- Highly resistant to fire blight •Matures 2 weeks after 'Bartlett' - Stores 2 months without core breakdown

**Blake's Pride** - *Have not fruited this variety.*

- Released in 1998 by USDA-ARS-AFRS and The Ohio State University
- Aromatic flavor and aroma, similar to 'Comice'
- Highly resistant to fire blight
- Matures 2 weeks after 'Bartlett' - Stores for 3-4 months without core breakdown.

**Shenandoah** – *Productive. I have had a lot of blossom fire blight strikes but the infection did not progress into the twigs. My storage has not been very long but maybe because I did not pick soon enough. Also, the bloom time in Sebastopol is very late. It has good acid balance and cooks beautifully.*

- Released in 2002 by USDA-ARS-AFRS and The Ohio State University
- Aromatic, sub-acid to acid flavor; mellows in storage
- Fire blight resistance equal to 'Seckel' - Moderate at best
- Late maturing: Harvest 4 to 5 weeks after 'Bartlett' - Stores 5 months without core breakdown

**Sunrise** - *I do not have this variety - scions are not yet available from the Repository. Too early ripening for me. Its storage is very good for an early ripening pear.*

- Released in 2006 by USDA-ARS-AFRS and Ohio State University
- Aromatic, sweet flavor; high consumer sensory ratings - Productive
- Moderately resistant to fire blight
- Matures 2 weeks before 'Bartlett' (Clapp's season)
- Stores for 2-3 months without core breakdown - That's very good for an early ripening pear.

**Gem** – *Beautiful fruit that can be eaten crisp directly off the tree.*

- Joint release with Oregon State University, Michigan State University and Clemson University, 2013
- Good fruit quality and appearance – good consumer acceptance - Can be eaten crisp or softened - Gem requires at least 3 weeks of cold storage before normal fruit softening, but it will last for at least 28 weeks in cold storage without core breakdown
- Moderate fire blight resistance
- Long harvest period – 3 weeks without loss of storage , beginning in early September

### **Harrow/Vineland Canadian Pear Cultivars**

**Harvest Queen** - *I grew it in MS prior to release as HW 602 - Did well with good flavor. I have a young graft. I'm awaiting fruit production.*

- Released 1982 • Good flavor - Bartlett like
- Moderate fire blight resistance
- Harvest two weeks before Bartlett - early August

**Harrow Delight** - *I grew it in MS prior to release as HW 603. Good quality. My young tree had a good crop in 2024. Ripens well without refrigeration.*

- Released 1982 • Does not keep well
- Good fire blight resistance
- Harvest two weeks before Bartlett - early August

**Harrow Sweet.** *This may be the most precocious pear variety I have ever grown. My tree had fruit in its second year. It is becoming a favorite variety in our area.*

- Released 1991
- Excellent flavor - Bartlett-like
- Moderate fire blight resistance
- Harvest 3 weeks after Bartlett

**Harovin Sundown (Marketed as Coldsnap)** *Now only sold as Coldsap. Scions are not available*

- Released 2008
- High fruit quality: sweet flavor, little grit
- Best after 3-4 weeks of cold storage
- Fire blight tolerant
- Harvest late September - three weeks after Bartlett

### **Purdue University Pear Cultivars**

**Green Jade** - *I have not grafted this variety*

- Released 2004 • Mildly sweet, buttery to melting, slight aroma

- Fire blight resistance - Tolerant, similar to Honeysweet
- Maturity: Early August - Storage Life: ~ 2months

**Ambrosia** - *I have not grafted this variety*

- Released 2005
- High quality fruit, with sweet flavor and no grit
- Tolerant of fire blight
- Matures mid-August

**Honeysweet** - *I have never had a fire blight strike on my tree.*

- Released 1977
- Excellent "Seckel"-like flavor - That was my experience in MS, but not in Sebastopol.
- Good fire blight resistance
- Self-fertile or parthenocarpic
- Matures early September

### Other Blight Resistant Varieties

**Warren** - *Family favorite. Found by my mentor, T.O. Warren in Hattiesburg, MS. Felt by many to be a sister seedling of Magness that was never formally released by the USDA. It is a fairly low chill variety, but does not bloom early. It sometimes bears fruit in Houston, TX - Magness does not. Warren has become an excellent variety in northern California. Go to Frog Hollow Farms website.*

- Released by T.O. Warren in 1976
- Excellent Flavor • Highly resistant to fire blight
- Pollen sterile – Wind pollination seems to be very helpful.
- Matures early September - pick a week or two after Bartlett. Stores at low 30s temperature for three months

**Elliot** (*Trademark Selena in France and Spain*)- *I'll admit, I had never heard of this variety until one of our members, Bob McCarville, told me he was ordering scions from the Corvallis Repository. After reading about it on the GRIN site and Joan Morgan's, The Book of Pears. I feel this is a variety that should be evaluated by the group! I have a small tree grafted in 2020, planted in 2021, fruited 2023 with a good crop 2024*

- Released 1988 by Dr. Kay Ryugo, University of California, Davis,
- Buttery texture; flavor similar to Bosc
- Good fire blight resistance
- Harvest 2-4 weeks after Bartlett - stores 16 weeks at 0 C

**Seckel** - *An excellent tasting, very small pear with moderate fire blight resistance. I lost most of my tree during the 2014 and 2015 fire blight years. It survived and recovered nicely. Remember, blight resistance does not mean immunity and some years even blight resistant trees can become infected.*

- Released 1817
- Excellent Flavor
- Moderate fire blight resistance
- Harvest about 2 weeks after Bartlett

**Tyson** - *Small early pear. Very delicious but, like most early pears, does not keep well. Better than Clapp's Favorite. Tyson is very tardy setting fruit. I have fruited it in a few years by top working it to a mature tree. The old saying "plant pears for your grandchildren" is really true for this variety.*

- Released mid 1800s
- Excellent Flavor
- Excellent fire blight resistance
- Harvest about 2 weeks before Bartlett

There are many European x Asian pear hybrids that are fire blight resistant. I have listed some in the article I wrote for the Redwood Empire Chapter website. None of them really have the flavor and texture that the ones listed here possess. That said, if you experience bad fire blight, look to the hybrids that have been developed such as Ayers. Here is a link to my article: [http://crfg-redwood.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/blight\\_resistant\\_pear\\_2016.pdf](http://crfg-redwood.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/blight_resistant_pear_2016.pdf).

**Asian Pears** - I have had fire blight kill or damage most all Asian pears. Shinko is the only common one that is very fire blight resistant and it is not listed in the Corvallis Repository fire blight resistant list. Ya Li and Tsu Li are listed, but blight has killed them several times in my orchard!

### **Shinko**

- Released 1941
- Good Flavor
- Excellent fire blight resistance
- Ripens mid to late September - *hangs on the tree for several weeks.*