

EIGHT APPLE AND TWENTY-THREE HERITAGE PEAR VARIETIES SAFEGUARDED FROM EXTINCTION

Kosovo growers worked recently with a local fruit conservation expert to establish orchards containing trees that grow several Kosovo heritage apple and pear varieties. Their efforts have helped protect eight apple and twenty-three pear varieties from extinction.

Kosovo's heritage apples and pears are well-known and often sought after by amateur gardeners. Most trees growing these fruits, however, are on private lands and receive little maintenance. With many of Kosovo's heritage apple and pear varieties close to extinction, conservation of these fruits is essential.

Moreover, many of Kosovo's regional apple varieties were bred at a time when diseases



Apple variety Vizake

were poorly understood and chemical controls did not exist. Thus, these old apple varieties are potential sources of natural pest and disease resistance. It is important to preserve these fruit varieties for future study and use in breeding.

For a recent HPK Heritage Fruit Conservation project, Professor Talat Efendija, a local consultant, identified local heritage fruits and established orchards which grow these varieties. Professor Efendija began with a survey

in the municipalities of Peja, Istog, Deçan, Gjakova, Junik, Viti and Drenas. With help from local growers, he collected fruit varieties from apple and pear trees which were between 80 and 200 years old. After the CAV Institute in Italy checked leaf samples for common apple viruses, local nurseries then used the samples to multiply the collected varieties. Finally, orchards were established with heritage apple and pear varieties from the locally-produced saplings.

Overall, Professor Efendija identified, tagged, and mapped twenty apple trees, of eight varieties, and fifty-six pear trees, of 23 varieties. Local nurseries bred approximately 1,200 pear and 2,400 apple saplings in 2009. Under Professor Efendija's guidance, and with HPK's financial support, three orchards containing heritage apple trees were established in the municipalities of Istog, Deçan, and Gjakova. 1,154 saplings of eight varieties were planted, including the heritage apple varieties of Vizajke, Sherbete e bardhë, Sherbete e kuçe, Gjyle e moçme, Kulaçe, Lalçe e kuçe, Lalçe e bardhë, and Lakne.



Pear tree