

A Wealth of Beauty and Detail

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More than 6,000 splendid watercolors of apples, blackberries, cherries, grapes, persimmons, and other fruits are preserved at the ARS National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, Maryland. Known as the USDA Pomological Watercolor Collection, this treasury of original prints and related materials makes up one of the world's most unusual holdings of late 19th and early 20th century American botanical illustrations.

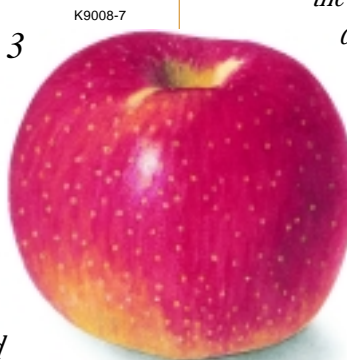
Described as a "priceless but little known legacy for all Americans," many of these beautiful drawings resulted from USDA scientists' need to depict—with absolute accuracy—new varieties that they had developed or perhaps gathered during overseas plant-collecting expeditions.

Explains Susan H. Fugate, head of the library's special collections, "These early researchers couldn't just pick up a handy camera and pop in a roll of color film." So,

beginning in 1887, USDA's Division of Pomology hired skilled artists who created the precise yet pleasing drawings that make up the collection.

Many of the superb, highly detailed prints were featured in early USDA publications, including bulletins and circulars for farmers, as well as annual reports. Today, the drawings are a boon to horticulturists, historians, artists, and publishers. These specialists—and others—rely on the realistic illustrations as an invaluable source of information about the history of growing fruit in the United States.—By Marcia Wood, ARS.

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Treasures of the National Agricultural Library

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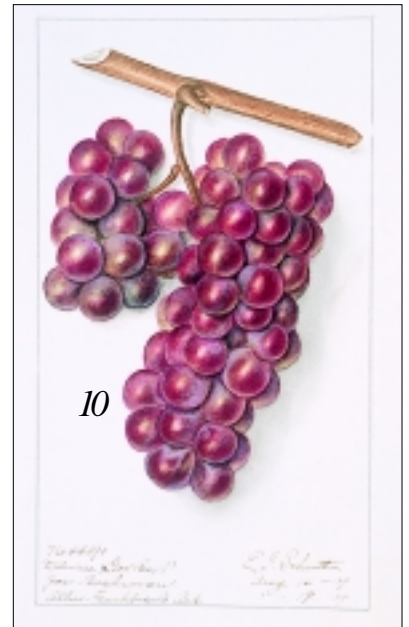
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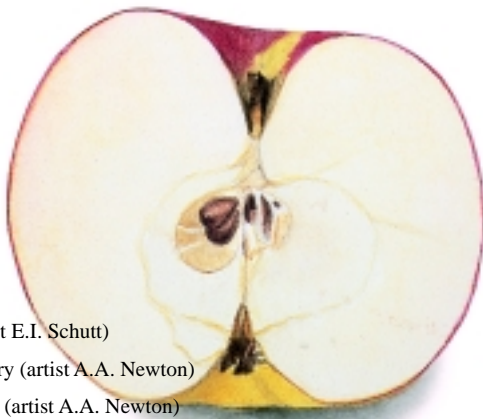
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In the late 1800s and early 1900s, USDA hired about 50 illustrators to produce watercolors of new varieties of fruits and nuts. The result was a collection of thousands of beautiful and precise renderings that serve as accurate records of the fruits of that era. One of those prolific artists, Amanda A. Newton, was the granddaughter of Isaac Newton, the nation's first Commissioner of Agriculture.

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1. Hoosier raspberry (artist E.I. Schutt)
2. Pan American strawberry (artist A.A. Newton)
3. American Beauty apple (artist A.A. Newton)
4. Bachman's Grape #309 (artist R.G. Steadman)
5. Wineberry raspberry (artist W.H. Prestele)
6. Fuyu persimmon (artist R.G. Steadman)
7. Schaffer raspberry (artist A.A. Newton)
8. Princess Ena strawberry (artist D.G. Passmore)
9. *Rubus fruticosus* blackberry (artist A.A. Newton)
10. Delaware x Gor Ross grape (artist E.I. Schutt)