

Brown Reds: Crossing with Birchens to Improve Them

By John Wunderlich, of St. Louis Missouri

About 5 years ago I started out to produce and develop a strain of Brown Reds with lemon color. The APA Standard called for lemon and black while the new ABA Standard calls for deep orange and black. For 40 years all the Brown Reds I have seen or judged have had the deep orange color. I've seen Lemon Blues with dark blue and lemon color but never lemon and black.

There may be ways in which the breeder of Moderns can make crosses to improve a variety which is not true in many other breeds. That is why it is said that Moderns are the breeders delight.

I started out crossing a Brown Red cockerel with a Birchen pullet. The offspring were beautiful Brown Red pullets with rich orange top color while the male had light lemon top color. The lemon-black males were crossed with the Brown Red pullets and the Brown Red cockerels with the Birchen pullets. So far I have produced some fine Brown Reds of both sexes, and some excellent Birchen pullets,

The next step is to mate Brown Reds together. So far I have not produced the lemon top color which I started out to do. Since it is now orange instead of lemon that we want my program is working out fine. These crosses have been interesting and have had several side effects. Since Birchens had good type the cross improved Brown Red type, vigor, vitality, fertility and hatchability. Orange color is rich, black has green sheen and silver white on Birchens is bright.

In addition to establishing a strain of Brown Reds I am on my way to a strain of Golden Birchens — that is lemon and black. If Golden Birchens become an accepted variety, perhaps present day Birchens will be called Silver Birchens or White Birchens.

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