

Identifying the *Shropshire Prune Damson*

If you've got a damson tree but don't know what variety it is, have a look at the following photos of damsons as they might help with your identification.

The following photos are of five of the varieties of damson that grow in the National Damson Collection at the Coalbrookdale Arboretum in Coalbrookdale, Shropshire, UK. Thanks to the Friends of the Coalbrookdale Arboretum for giving permission to pick a few fruits off each tree.

Relative Size and Shape

This first photo shows the relative size and shape of five damson varieties.



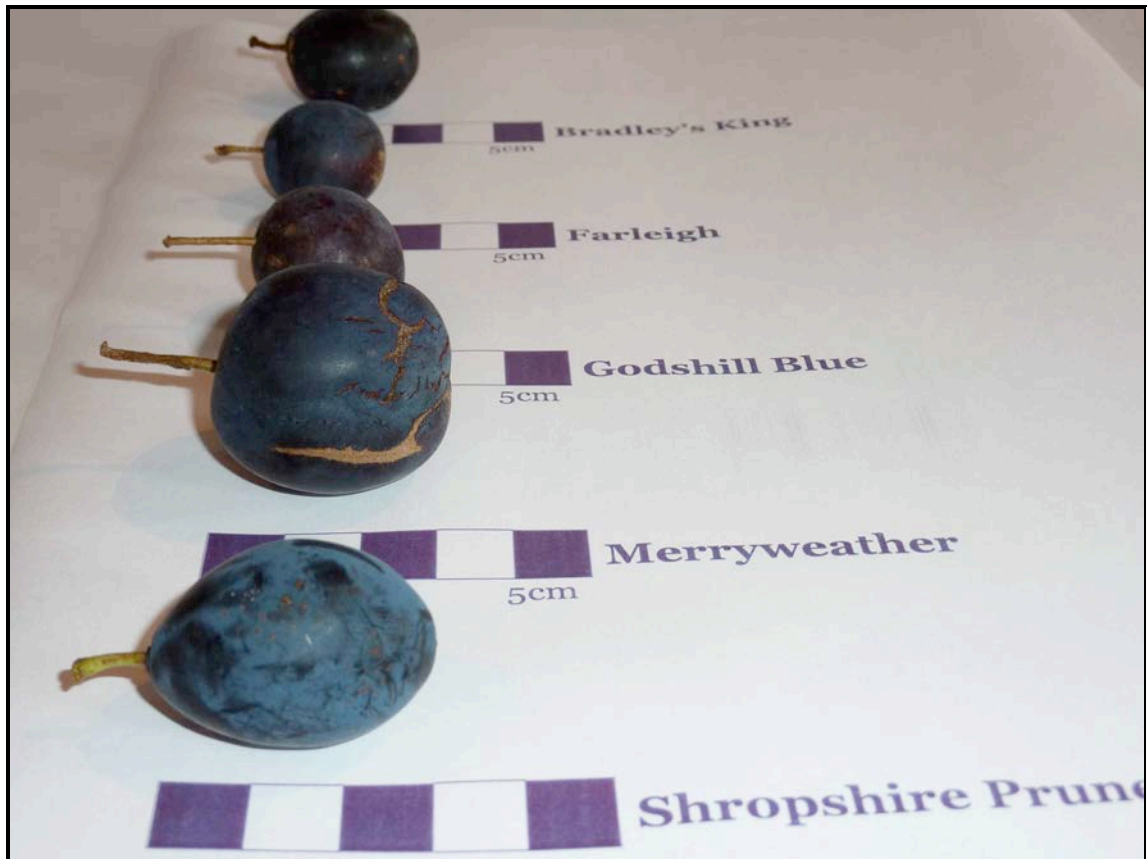
With one exception all the damsons are round in shape.

The exception is the *Shropshire Prune*, which is distinctly oval (ovoid) in shape.

Godshill Blue is very cherry-like in shape (this is an embodiment of its ancestry).

Relative Profile

The next photo captures a bit more of the profile of the damsons and clearly shows that *Merryweather* is the biggest of the lot.



Diminutive

The teaspoon really does show that damsons, even *Merryweather*, are *small* fruits.



Some Key Features of the *Shropshire Prune*

The next photo enables a peer inside the *Shropshire Prune*.

Ignore the date 1676 because we now understand that the *Shropshire Prune* was first mentioned in print in the late 1500s.

Again, notice how oval it is. The stone is very sharp at one end, and the flesh, when fully ripe, is yellow.



Shropshire Prunes Growing on the Tree

Finally, this photo shows *Shropshire Prunes* on the tree about one month (mid-August) before they are ripe and ready for picking (mid-September).

Notice the blue-black skins, and the heavy bloom on the fruits.



Three Defining Characteristics of the *Shropshire Prune*

You've probably got a *Shropshire Prune* tree if your damsons are:

- markedly oval in shape
- about 3 cm by 2 cm
- have a blue-black skin that is heavily bloomed

Did you find this mini-identification guide useful? What variety of damson have you got?