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Investigation of the Cold Resistance of Promising Plum Cultivars during the Winter Period

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SUMMARY

Low winter temperatures have a negative impact on the vitality of the tree, the quantity and quality of the harvest, therefore it was necessary to investigate the cold hardiness of fruit tree cultivars.

The selection of cultivars with good cold hardiness has a great economic and social effect against the background of changing climatic conditions. The purpose of this studied was to determine the level of cold resistance during the winter months of the plum cultivars grown in the area, for their more optimal microzoning.

A climatic characterization of the cold months in the area for the last 10 years was made.

In the winter of 2022-2023, climatic indicators were observed: precipitation (mm), average, minimum

Jojo, Top,
Black Diamond, Anna Shpet Stanley

and maximum daily air temperature, and the cold resistance of plums cultivars Jojo, Top, Black Diamond, Anna Shpet and Stanley was studied under soil and climatic conditions of Kyustendil region.

The level of sensitivity to low winter temperatures was determined under controlled (laboratory) conditions.

Freezing was carried out three times – in the middle of the months of December, January and February. The following options were set: 1st variant -15° ; 2nd variant -20° ; 3rd variant -25° and control (untreated).

Weather conditions significantly affected the cold resistance of the fruit buds of the cultivars.

The most significant damages were observed in February, and the best cold resistance was in January.

Cultivar Anna Shpet showed the highest general resistance, and the most sensitive to low winter temperatures was Jojo. In recent years, cultivar Top has gained more and more popularity and has been of interest to growers.

It showed very high resistance and was suitable for habitats with low winter temperatures.

Key words: Low temperatures, cold hardiness, climatic conditions, plum

INTRODUCTION

Fruit growing was a branch of agriculture that was highly dependent on climate dynamics.

When chose a place to create an orchard, we had to know the climate of the area well.

After carrying out a climatic survey of the area, suitable species and

		varieties should be selected.
		The climate in Kyustendil region was transitional-continental with relatively mild winters and warm and dry summers. Data on the value of current meteorological factors for a 100-year period showed that there were favorable conditions for growing plums in the area.
		A serious risk factor for the area was the late spring frosts, which coincided with the plum blossom and in some years caused significant damage, but the low winter temperatures should not be underestimated.
		Damage from low temperatures was one of the main determinants of production and distribution of fruit crops.
		Even the Romans knew the importance of low winter temperatures and spring frosts in zoning different types of cultivated plants.
2000		More than 2000 years ago, they made efforts to protect cultivated plants from low temperatures (Columela, 1965).
	(Columela, 1965).	
		Despite numerous studies and efforts devoted to reducing damage from cold temperatures, they cause more severe fruit losses than any other ecological or biological hazard (Weiser, 1970a; Thomashow, 1998).
	(Weiser, 1970 ; Thomashow, 1998).	
		Tolerance to low temperatures varies at different times of the year and in different tissues and parts of the plant (Weiser, 1970b).
	(Weiser, 1970b).	
		Frost damage to the plant can be associated with low temperatures before dormancy in the fall, in mid-

	winter during full dormancy, or during and after flowering in the spring.
(Palonen and Buszard, 1997),	Low autumn and winter temperatures mainly affect xylem, bark, roots and buds, but can also lead to tree death (Palonen and Buszard, 1997), which was rarely observed in our region.
(Duchovskis, 1998; Duchovskis et al., 2007).	The most resistant to freezing was the cambial tissue (Duchovskis, 1998; Duchovskis et al., 2007). In the phase of deep dormancy, the plum has showed very good cold resistance and ranks after the apple, cherry and pear. It tolerated air temperature of -30°C, even lower, without significant damage (Dzhuvinov et al., 2012; Dimitrova et al., 2021).
Szalay et al. (2017)	Szalay et al. (2017) found that cold hardiness of fruit buds in plum cultivars Stanley, a anska Lepotica and Besztercei increased gradually from November and reached its maximum in mid-January.
Stanley, a anska Lepotica Besztercei	
(Faust et al., 1997).	Most fruit tree species require a minimal increase in temperature to break dormancy (Faust et al., 1997).
	Once trees come out of complete dormancy and enter forced dormancy, their resistance to low winter temperatures decreases. Sometimes the flowers do not appear and this is due to the frosting of the buds before flowering and they drop off. Pae et al. (2004) proved that rootstock has an effect on cold tolerance of plum trees.
Pae et al. (2004)	
(Stushnoff, 1972).	Young, actively growing, flowering, and dehydrated plants were generally most vulnerable to freezing temperatures (Stushnoff, 1972). In temperate climates, damage during

flowering was generally more significant than that due to low winter temperatures (Rodrigo, 2000).

(Rodrigo, 2000).

Strinava, Izobilie, Anna Shpet, Tuleu Timpuriu, Mirabelle de Nancy, a anska Najbolja Althan's Gage (Georgieva and Serbezova, 2018).

(Denisov, 1961).

1-2
-15°C -20°C (rumov, 2014).
-29.5°C,
(Krumov and Christov, 2020).

flowering was generally more significant than that due to low winter temperatures (Rodrigo, 2000).

The most cold-resistant cultivars distributed in Bulgaria were Strinava, Izobilie, Anna Shpet, Tuleu Timpuriu, Mirabelle de Nancy, a anska Nogba and Althan's Gage (Georgieva and Serbezova, 2018). The evaluation of the cold resistance of fruit by the method of direct freezing of plants was considered one of the most objective (Denisov, 1961).

In recent years, in the Kyustendil region, it often happened that the absolute minimum temperature dropped for 1-2 days between -15°C and -20°C (Krumov, 2014). Record low winter temperatures of -29.5°C were also recorded, resulting in the destruction of the fruit crop (Krumov and Christov, 2020). The low winter temperatures have a negative impact on the vitality of the trees, the quantity and quality of the harvest, this made it necessary to investigate the cold resistance of the different cultivars of fruit trees.

The selection of cultivars with good cold resistance would have a great economic and social effect against the background of changing climatic conditions.

In this study, we set out to determine the degree of cold resistance of plum cultivars grown in the area during the winter months with the aim of their more optimal micro-zoning.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

2022-2023 .
Jojo, Top, Black

In the winter of 2022-2023, the cold resistance of the plum cultivars Jojo, Top, Black Diamond, Anna

Diamond, Anna Shpet Stanley

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2011 .

4 3 m.

(*Prunus cerasifera*).

80 cm

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(mm),

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-15° ;

-20° ;

-25°

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(1),

(Nedev et al., 1979).

Shpet and Stanley under the soil and climatic conditions of the Kyustendil region was studied. he degree of sensitivity to low winter temperatures was determined under controlled (laboratory) conditions.

The assortment plantation was created in the spring of 2011 at a planting distance of 4 x 3 m. The trees were grafted on *Prunus cerasifera* rootsock.

They were formed in a free-growing crown with a stem height of 80 cm and ware grown without irrigation.

Climatic characteristics of the winter months in the area for the last 10 years were made.

Climatic indicators were tracked: precipitation (mm); average, minimum and maximum daily air temperature during the study.

Average samples of fruit branches were taken from each cultivar, with each sample contained at least 100 fruit buds. Freezing was carried out three times – in the middle of December, January and February.

The following options were set: 1st variant -15° ; 2nd variant – 20° ; 3rd variant -25° and control (untreated). The branches were placed in a refrigerator with a gradual lowering of the temperature to the set levels.

The duration of each temperature threshold was 2 hours for each variant. After removing them and leaving them for two days at room temperature, the damaged flower primordia were counted by transverse sections of the fruit buds (Photo 1), (Nedev et al., 1979).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of the absolute minimum temperatures in the period November – March for the last ten years was made (Figure 1).

From the analysis it was seen that the temperatures began to decrease significantly in the month of December, when the fruit trees were going into a phase of deep rest.

The coldest month in the region was January. In 2017, minimum temperatures of -27°C were observed, and in that year fruit production was almost completely destroyed.

In February, the minimum and average daily temperature started to increase, and with this increase the trees gradually move from full to forced dormancy.

The greatest risk of winter damage to plum fruit buds was in February and March.

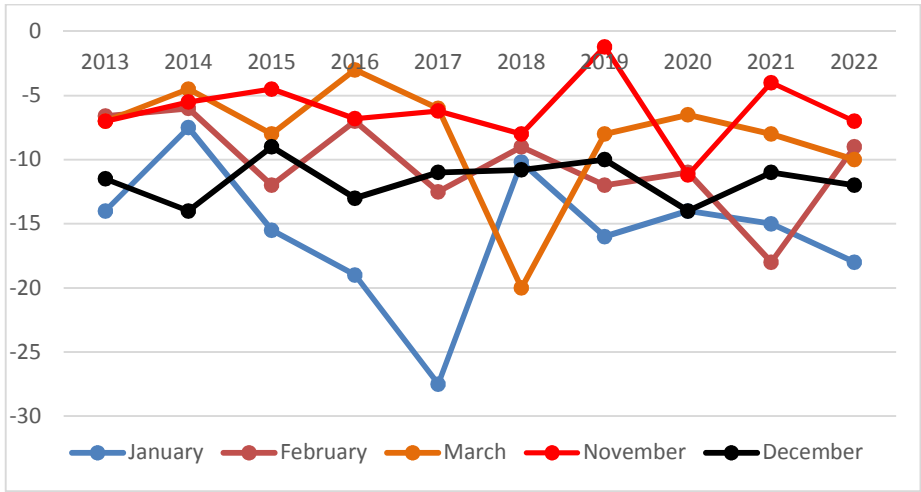


Fig. 1. Absolute minimum temperatures for the period November-March for the last ten years

2022 .	10.2°C,	In 2022, the average annual air temperature was 10.2°C, without deviation from the typical for Kyustendil region.
.		In terms of rainfall, it was the driest year in the last 10 years.
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e 415.5 mm,	32.0%	The annual rainfall was 415.5 mm, which was 32.0% below the annual precipitation norm for the area.
.		The tracking of climate indicators related to the objectives of the study, started from mid-November, when the plum trees had finished their growing season and were gradually going into winter dormancy.
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2022-2023 .		The winter period of 2022-2023 was favorable for wintering the trees, with the lowest measured air temperature -
,		13.9°C.
-13.9°C.	1.3°C -	December was 1.3°C warmer than the norm for the area, and January was
		2.8°C warmer, and these values were relatively high.
2.8°C,		
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,		The sensitivity of the buds to freezing was constantly changing during the winter. When experimenting, it was impossible to find a particular temperature that was most suitable for showing real differences in the cultivars tested.
-		Due to this fact, it was recommended to use a minimum of three critical temperatures in each treatment (Pedryc et al., 1997).
.		During the three freezing stages, in winter, the fruit buds of all cultivars had a very high percentage of damage at a temperature of -25°C, indicating that the temperature chosen was too low.
(Pedryc et al., 1997).		
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	-25°C,	
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.		In bud freezing at the other temperature thresholds (-15°C and

-20°C), (-15°C, -20°C), the cultivars were differentiated according to the level of damage (Table 1) In the controls, no damage were found.

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Table 1. Damages to fruit buds (%) of plum cultivars at different levels of freezing under lab conditions (December, January and February)

Temperature	Data	Cultivar				
		Jojo	Top	Black Diamond	Anna Shpet	Stanley(st)
		%				
-15°C	13.12.2022	57.8	43.5	51.5	29.4	35.6
	13.01.2023	8.2	5.7	40.2	22.7	20.9
	13.02.2023	69.5	21.2	66.7	29.7	36.5
-20°C	13.12.2022	100	76.5	71.8	57.0	78.4
	13.01.2023	91.7	86.4	79.7	70.9	90.6
	13.02.2023	100	100	100	100	100
-25°C	13.12.2022	100	100	100	86.9	100
	13.01.2023	100	100	100	100	100
	13.02.2023	100	100	100	100	100
Control (untreated)	13.12.2022	0	0	0	0	0
	13.01.2023	0	0	0	0	0
	13.02.2023	0	0	0	0	0

In the month of December, the cultivars showed moderate to high sensitivity to low temperatures. The reason for the high sensitivity can be explained by the fact that the trees were not prepared for such temperature stress due to the warm autumn season of the respective year (Figure 2).

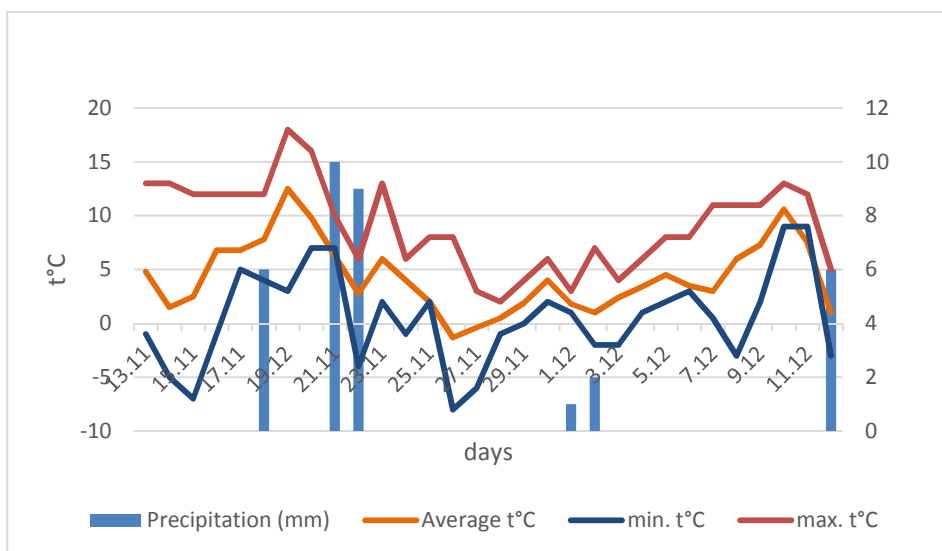
Also, lowering the temperature to -15°C and -20°C – are not typical for this part of the year (Figure 1).

In the -1st variant with a temperature threshold of -15° , the most resistant to low temperatures was Anna Shpet cultivar, with 29.4% damaged flower buds, with similar resistance was the standard cultivar with 35.6% damage.

In the other cultivars the damage was

57.8%.
 43.5%
 -20°C,
 Anna Shpet 57.0%
 Jojo, 100%
 71.8%
 78.4%.

from 43.5 to 57.8%.
 In the 2nd variant with a temperature threshold of -20° , Anna Shpet cultivar was again the most resistant with 57.0% damage. With very high sensitivity was the cultivar Jojo, which had 100% damaged flowers. The rest of the cultivars had damage from 71.8 to 78.4%.



. 2. , 2022 . 13- 12

Fig. 2. Climatic indicators for the period from November 13 to December 12, 2022

-
 -15°C
 Black diamond 40.2%
 23%.
 -20°C,
 -

In January, plum cultivars showed a higher resistance to a temperature of -15°C compared to December. Black Diamond cultivar showed the highest sensitivity 40.2% damage, while the other cultivars had damage below 23%.
 An uncharacteristic result was obtained for the variant with a temperature threshold of -20°C, and the cultivars showed a higher sensitivity compared to December. This phenomenon can be explained

(3),
 Anna Shpet 70.9%

by the unusually high temperatures in December and January (Figure 3), which can cause the trees to come out of deep dormancy.

- At this temperature, the best cold-resistant was Anna Shpet cultivar with 70.9% fruit bud damage.

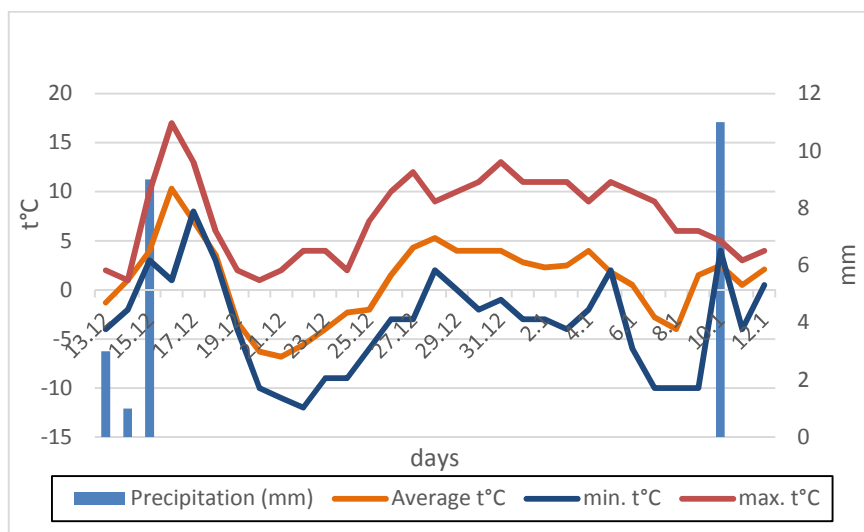


Fig. 3. Climatic indicators for the period from December 13 (2022) to January 12 (2023)

10.02
 -13°C (4)
 2
 -15°C
 1-2°C

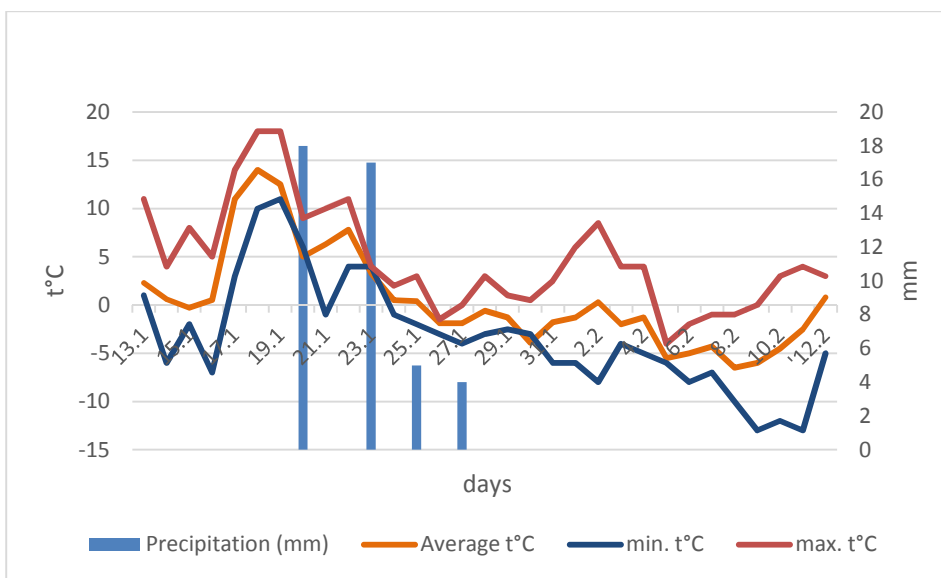
In February, two days before freezing on 10.02, the air temperature of -13°C for about 2 hours under natural conditions was recorded (Figure 4), and damaged flower buds were not reported in the control, while in the controlled freezing at a temperature of -15°C for two hours the damage was significant.

From these results it can be seen that sometimes small differences in temperatures of 1-2°C can be decisive in crop formation.

-15°C	-	Top	(21.2%
)	Anna	Shpet	(29.7%
)	-	-	-
Jojo	69.5%	-	-
-20°C,	100%	-	-
-	-	-	-

At a temperature of -15°C, the cultivars Top (21.2% damage) and Anna Shpet (29.7% damage) showed the best resistance.

The most sensitive was cultivar Jojo with 69.5% damage. Damage at -20°C was 100% in all cultivars, and this is explained by the more advanced phase of forced dormancy.



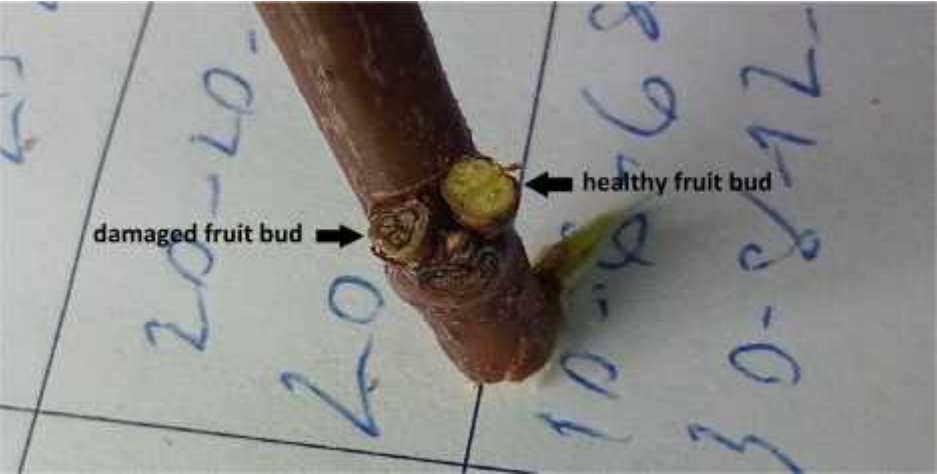
4. , 2023 .
Fig. 4. Climatic indicators for the period from January 13 to February 12, 2023

(5).	-	-15°C
	Top	23.5%	-
	-	-	-
Black Diamond.	-	-	-
-20°C	-	Anna	-
Shpet	76.0%	-	-
	-	Jojo	97.2%
	-	-	-

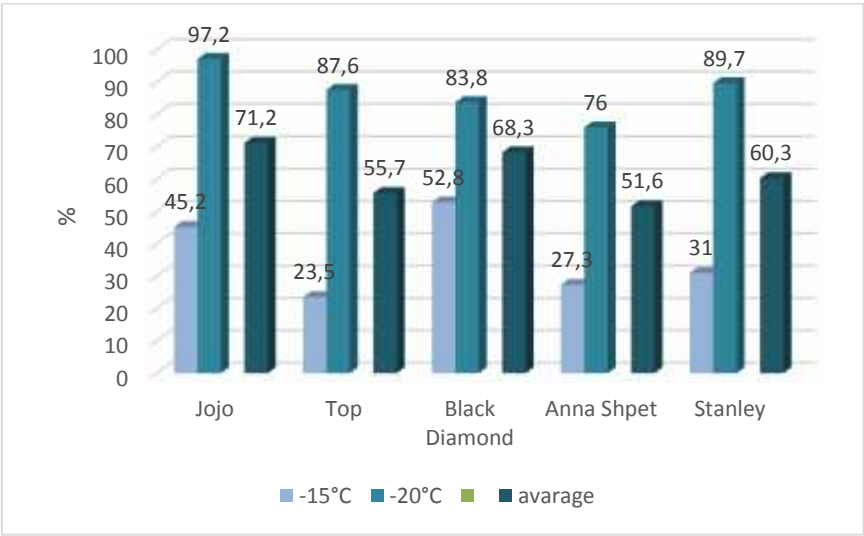
The average resistance at different temperature thresholds and the total resistance of all cultivars were reported (Figure5).

The most resistant at -15°C was the Top cultivar with 23.5% damaged flowers, and the most sensitive was Black Diamond. At a temperature of -20°C, the most resistant cultivar was Anna Shpet with 76.0% damage, and the most sensitive was Jojo with 97.2% damage. With the highest

51.6%	Anna Shpet	overall resistance was Anna Shpet
Jojo 71.2%		51.6% damage, and the most
		sensitive was Jojo cultivar with 71.2%.



1.
Photo 1. Cross-section of buds



. 5. , -15°C -20°C
Fig. 5. Damaged fruit buds, averaged at -15°C and -20°C for the three replicates and average resistance for each cultivar

At the end of this research can be said that usually the fruit buds of the plum trees had a higher resistance to winter frosts than the results obtained. The reason for the low resistance – was due to the uncharacteristically warm winter, a phenomenon reported by Gravite, who after research concluded that in warm winters the damage from cold temperatures was higher (Gravite, 2022).

At the end of this research can be said that usually the fruit buds of the plum trees had a higher resistance to winter frosts than the results obtained. The reason for the low resistance – was due to the uncharacteristically warm winter, a phenomenon reported by Gravite, who after research concluded that in warm winters the damage from cold temperatures was higher (Gravite, 2022).

CONCLUSIONS

Meteorological conditions significantly affected the cold resistance of the fruit buds of the studied cultivars.

The best resistance was showed in the month of January. The most significant damage was observed in February. In the conducted study, the cultivar with the highest resistance was Anna Shpet. The most sensitive to low winter temperatures was the Jojo cultivar.

In recent years, the Top cultivar has gained more and more popularity and was of interest to growers.

It showed very high resistance to low temperatures and was suitable for habitats with low temperatures in winter.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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