

FUN FACES OF WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE MOLLY MACINTOSH'S APPLE FAST FACTS (8/2011)



Production Information

Apples grow on trees in orchards. Trees are pruned in the winter when they are dormant. Pruning is the removal of branches to maximize sunlight to the fruit and to remove dead and diseased limbs.

New trees are planted in the spring. They are usually a desired fruit variety grafted onto a desirable root stock. The average tree will bear fruit in three years with full production in 8-10 years. Most trees today are dwarf stock or a smaller size. They are easier to work with and more efficient in land use.

Buds will begin to swell and trees will blossom in early May. Grass around the trees is mowed to reduce competition from weeds and other plants. Growers will use IPM (Integrated Pest Management) to watch for insects and develop a program to reduce or prevent them. When the center of the blossom (the King Blossom) opens, then bees will help pollinate the trees. Cross-pollination will help assure a good fruit crop. Fertilizing and training the trees (working with the limbs) will help grow and to attain a better shape. If it is dry, irrigation may be needed in July as the fruit size and firmness are affected by moisture. August is the last growing month before apples ripen. Apples like cool August evenings to trigger an enzyme which increases the color or blush of the ripened apples. Harvest is done by hand as apples bruise easily.

Wisconsin Production

Commercial orchards are found across Wisconsin, comprising about 4,200 acres and producing about 44 million pounds of fruit worth over \$14 million per year. The average yield is 10,400 pounds per acre. Most of the commercial acreage is found in four locations in the state. The most concentrated areas are Gays Mills in Crawford County, Door County area, Bayfield County and in the greater Milwaukee area.

Career Information

Seasonal labor may be needed for harvesting apples. Entomologists work with growers to control insects. Food processors make apples into various products for consumers to buy. Pruners will help trim branches and limbs. Food crop specialists are scientists that work in new food uses, better production methods and food safety. Retail and sales clerks sell the final product to the consumers. Beekeepers provide bees for pollination in orchards.

Trivia

- If you grew 100 apples trees from the seeds of one tree, they would all be different. Each has its own genetic material.
- The pilgrims brought apples to North America in 1620.
- Apples have five seed pockets with a seed in each pocket.
- The biggest apple pie weighed 30,116 pounds!

Other Information

Apples are members of the pome family- a fruit whose seeds are embedded in the core of the fruit. Roses are also members of this family.

Apples are grown in all 50 states and over 2500 varieties are grown nationwide. Apples are fat, sodium and cholesterol free so they make a healthy snack. They are also a great source of fiber pectin. An average apple has five grams of fiber and about 80 calories. Americans eat about 19.6 pounds or 65 fresh apples every year. In addition, Americans eat processed apples (i.e. applesauce, dried apples) to raise the total consumption to 42.2 total pounds per year.

Why do they float? 25% of an apple's volume is air.