

News Article

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Date: October 8, 2018
Please use by: October 18, 2018

It's Autumn in Indiana, Time to Enjoy Apples!

One of the things I personally like to do is visit orchards. Although I don't do it as often as I'd like, I always enjoy the experience. Many local orchards offer fun activities, gift shops, and of course – fresh apples and apple products.

According to Purdue University's Fruit and Vegetable Connection website, <https://ag.purdue.edu/hla/fruitveg/>, Indiana has approximately 4000 acres of apples, with annual production of about 1.2 million bushels (42 lb. units). National apple production is 250 million bushels, with about half of that being produced in Washington State. Indiana ranks 15th in production. Apples are produced throughout the state, with no real concentration of production, although farms tend to be located near population centers. The most popular varieties are Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, Jonathan, Gala, Rome and Fuji, which together comprise 70% of the trees in the state. The other 30% of trees is made up by some 95 other varieties.

According to the website, most apple orchards sell their crop directly to the public through on farm markets or community farmers' markets. Apples are a symbol of fall to many people, and a farm market draws customers not only to purchase apples, but also cider, other fruits and vegetables, and various preserves and the like. A number of growers have discovered they can sell not only the product, but also the farm experience and activities such as petting zoos, corn mazes and school tours not only attract more customers, but also provide additional profit centers.

Many homeowners have installed "backyard" orchards because of their love for apples. Many with home orchards in recent years have wisely planted apple trees with dwarfing rootstocks. As the name implies, a dwarfing rootstock causes the apple tree to remain fairly small. This allows for easier care and easier picking, mostly without a ladder.

For the home fruit grower, GoldRush, Enterprise, Redfree, Prima, Jonafree, Priscilla, and Sir Prize are some of the suggested varieties because they are immune to apple scab and moderately resistant to fire blight and powdery mildew, diseases of concern with apples.

Individuals obviously have different tastes in fresh apples. Some descriptors of taste and texture include tart, tangy, sweet, bland, firm, juicy, crisp, crunchy and granular. Michigan Apple Committee has a nice website describing the characteristics of many of the popular apple varieties we also enjoy here in Indiana at: <http://www.michiganapples.com/>.

For freezing, select apple varieties that are crisp and firm and not mealy textured. Some examples of good freezing apples include Golden Delicious, Rome Beauty, Jonathan, York Imperial, and Granny Smith.

Good canning apples include Jonathan, Golden Delicious, McIntosh, Braeburn, Crispin, York Imperial and others.

Applesauce is a favorite processed apple product of many Hoosier families. Select varieties that are sweet, juicy and crisp. Some good applesauce varieties include Golden Delicious, Rome Beauty, Jonathan, Fuji, York Imperial and McIntosh. Some prefer a tarter flavor, which requires the addition of tart-flavored apple varieties. I recently received a call from a local resident who offered her “recipe” for the best family applesauce ever, and it included some varieties I have not listed here. (Sorry, I didn’t write it down. I guess you’ll have to do your own experiments).

When buying fruit, buy only good quality fruit, free of bruises, cuts, and decay.

For more information, search for publications on apples, managing pests in home fruit plantings, and apple preservation at Purdue Extension’s Education Store: www.edustore.purdue.edu.

Finally, if you would like to learn more about raising apples and other fruits, the Indiana Horticultural Congress is an educational meeting designed to meet the needs of fruit, vegetable, wine, organics, and specialty crop growers and marketers in Indiana and surrounding states. All interested individuals are invited to attend February 12-14, 2019 in Indianapolis. Find more information at <https://www.inhortcongress.org/>.