APPLE VARIETIES

There are several considerations to make when choosing apple tree varieties, including apple type, ripening date, tree size, and what is available in garden centers. In areas with commercial orchards, the growing of backyard trees is discouraged because in these areas, controlling infestations—such as apple maggots—is crucial to the success of the local apple industry.

In Washington State, homeowners have a legal responsibility to manage insect pests that may reside on their backyard fruit trees. Homeowners not willing to protect their fruit trees from apple maggots and other pests should not consider planting fruit trees on their residential property. Check for local, county, and state regulations and restrictions.

Rootstock:
Apple trees grown on dwarf or semi-dwarf rootstocks are recommended for home orchards. They are smaller in size than standard trees and therefore easier to spray, prune, and harvest. They begin bearing fruit two to three years earlier than standard trees and bear about the same amount of fruit as standard trees.

Cross-pollination:
All apple trees need to be cross-pollinated to produce fruit. This means that pollen from a different variety that blooms at the same time must be nearby. (Nearby is not an exact distance: closer is better, but a neighbor’s tree can do the trick).

Spokane County Extension publication C105, "Pollination of Fruit Trees," lists cross-pollinators for local apple varieties. Some trees for home gardens come grafted with a pollinating variety on them. You can also bring cut branches from a pollinator tree that is in bloom and place them in amongst your tree branches.

Maintenance:
Apple trees will bear quality fruit only when they are maintained properly.

- Prune annually to maximize light and air circulation throughout the tree. Spokane County Extension can help with pruning tips and techniques.
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- Washington State Law (RCW 15.09.060) states that property owners must control horticultural pests on their property. Spokane County Extension publication C041, "Spray Schedule for Apples," lists when and how to spray for diseases of apple trees. Avoid pesticide application during bloom to protect honey bees and other pollinators!

For information on treatments and preventative practices for specific apple diseases and pests, visit our website, Hortsense.

Local Varieties:
Ripening dates may vary a bit from region to region and from one year to the next. Use this list as a guideline, but remember that these varieties may not be available in all places and there may be others that may be suitable in your area.

**Early-season Apple Varieties:** picked in August or early September. Many have short shelf lives and must be eaten or processed within a few weeks.

- Earligold: Yellow apple with good flavor. Stores longer than other early types. Ripens early September.
- Gingergold: Yellow apple with a crisp and slightly tart flavor. Stores well. Trees susceptible to powdery mildew. Ripens late August.
- Gravenstein: Can be yellow, red striped, or full red. Large, crisp, tart apple. Good eating apple but excels in pies. Stores well for several months. Ripens in late August or early September.
- Lodi: Green in color, medium sized fruit. Matures early August. Eat or process within 2-3 weeks of harvesting.
- Paula Red: Red skin, medium size fruit with tart and creamy flavor. Susceptible to apple scab and powdery mildew. Ripens late August. Stores well when refrigerated.
- Tydemans Early: Red skin, medium size fruit. Ripens late August, early September. Stores well.
- Yellow Transparent: Pale greenish yellow skin, medium sized fruit. Strong flavor, good as cooking apple. Matures late July. Eat or process within 2-3 weeks of harvesting.

**Mid-season Apple Varieties:** picked mid-September to early October.

- Chehalis: Greenish, yellow apple that is medium to large in size. Slightly more tart then Yellow Delicious. Ripens mid-September.
- Cortland: Red, large, and soft fruit. Flavor is mildly tart and tangy with extreme juiciness. Susceptible to apple scab. Mid to late season, ripens early October.
- Crab: Small, rosy red fruit that is very tart. High pectin and acid content makes it good for jelly or jam. Ripens late September.
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- **Empire:** Red, medium sized fruit that is firm and crisp. Flavor is more sweet than it is tart. Stores well. Cross between McIntosh and Red Delicious. Mid to late season, ripens in early October.

- **Gala:** Yellow background with red stripes or red blush. Other strains, such as Royal Gala are redder. Medium sized, crisp, sweet, and juicy fruit. Ripens late September.

- **Honeycrisp:** Large red and yellow striped fruit that is juicy and crisp. Stores incredibly well (up to 7 months) in refrigerator. Ripens in mid-September and early October.

- **Liberty:** Yellow fruit with red stripes. Crisp and tart flavor. Good resistance to apple scab, fire blight, cedar apple rust, and powdery mildew. Ripens early October.

- **McIntosh:** Large, red fruit. Sweet and tart flavor makes it an excellent dessert apple, but it's soft flesh means it doesn't store well. Susceptible to apple scab and powdery mildew. Ripens mid-September.

- **Priscilla:** Red fruit with a unique spicy flavor. Good disease resistance. Ripens mid-September.

- **Spartan:** Red and firm medium sized fruit. Finn and crisp texture with a brisk flavor and aroma. Stores very well. Ripens late September.

**Late-season Apple Varieties:** late blooms help prevent damage from late spring frosts. Picked mid-October or later.

- **Cosmic Crisp:** Red, medium-large, firm, and sweet fruit with a crisp texture. Great for eating or baking. Stores very well in refrigerator. Ripens mid-October.

- **Golden Delicious:** Yellow, medium-large fruit. Sweet and juicy. Many strains available. No relation to Red Delicious apple. Heavy cropper and susceptible to biennial bearing, so thinning fruit is recommended. Short storage. Ripens early October.

- **Idared:** Red, large, and tart apple with a pleasantly strong aroma. Flesh is crisp and tart. Does well as a cooking apple, particularly in apple butter. Stores well. Ripens mid-October.

- **Jonagold:** Orange, yellow fruit that is firm and juicy. Best as a sweet-tart dessert apple. Stores fairly well when picked on-time. Ripens mid-October.

- **Sir Prize:** Large, yellow-green fruit. Very tender and juicy flesh with rich flavor and distinctive aroma. Best as a dessert apple. Good disease resistance. Ripens mid-October.

- **Rome Beauty:** Large red fruit with a mild flavor. Good baking or cooking apple. Ripens late October.

**Apple Varieties Unsuitable for Northeast Washington:**

- Winesap, Mutsu, Fuji, Braeburn, Newton Pippin and Northern Sky apples ripen after Rome Beauty and may not mature in this growing season, at least for consistent production.

- Pink Lady apples require a long growth period and hot climate so are unsuited to our freezing winters.
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References:

Revised Code of Washington - [RCW Title 15 Agriculture and Marketing - Section 15.09.060](#)
Owner's duty to control pests and diseases

WSU EB1928E “Protecting Backyard Apple Trees from Apple Maggot”

WSU FS120E “Coddling Moth and Your Backyard Fruit Tree”

Check out the [WSU Tree Fruit Website](#)