

## Fruit News article September 2017

I am always happy when peach season ends and apple harvest begins. While peach production is a necessity for our fresh market business, peach harvest was never a favorite part of my job. Way too hot and itchy for my liking. I love the crispness of the fall air, the fall smells, and the colors of the apples on the trees this time of the year. Carrying the full bins of apples out of the orchard with the tractor and watching the families pick apples from our trees in our pick-your-own orchard gives me a sense of pride and accomplishment. Working behind the sorting table in the market is also much more enjoyable for me in apple season. I get very exhausted answering the same peach questions over and over. Are they freestone? Which is sweeter, white or yellow? Why don't you have Red Haven (because it's Labor Day ma'am). I find the apple questions to be much more varied, and more enjoyable to answer. Well, most of them.

Is it pronounced Gal-la, or Gay-la? Is this a Mutsu or a Crispin? Why isn't there an "A" in McIntosh? Does Macoun rhyme with noun or the animal with the masked face and striped tail? While I enjoy educating the general consumer population about my passion for apples, sometimes I think the people who name apples just like to make things confusing. The Honeycrisp name however is a winner. Everyone remembers it and the name describes exactly what it is. I've observed many times that the name of an apple is integral to its success in the marketplace, no matter what it tastes like. Modern day breeders seem to understand that concept, and I'm glad. Then there's always the forgotten varietal names from the past like Bloody Ploughman, Adanac (Canada spelled backwards), Dog's Snout, or that old favorite Peasgood's Nonsuch. I guess I shouldn't complain about Mutsu, it could be worse, I could be trying to sell Nonnetit Bastards by the peck.

No two apple seasons are alike, and this one has been interesting for most of us. An overabundance of rain, insect and disease issues, hail, impending hurricanes, labor shortages and on and on. A few short months ago we were discussing thinning dilemmas with each other at the twilight meetings. We all made our best guess, and now as we harvest the crop we know what we should have done differently. The tops broke out of a bunch of my 6 year old Winesap trees because I didn't thin enough of the crop off. I don't think this is what Dr. Schupp meant when he was talking about "crop and flop" at the pruning demo. It's disheartening to look at now, but on the plus side it makes pruning decisions easier this winter. Monday morning quarterbacking is popular in the orchard this time of the year. No matter how our final harvest turned out, we just need to remember that we made the best decisions with the information and conditions that were present at the time. A good description for how to best handle fruit growing, as well as a good recipe for how we should look back on our life.

Happy harvesting,  
Tad

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