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McIntosh News



**The growing
apple business
of Pastor Chuck
page 4**

**It's pruning time!
page 2**



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It's pruning time

By BAR WEEKS



It's pruning time in our New England apple orchards. While the trees are leafless and dormant, it's easier to see just where pruning is needed, and the trees are less likely to be injured. By pruning before leaves begin to appear, the cuts have time to heal, reducing the risk of insect and disease problems.

Pruning is important for overall good tree health. By pruning judiciously, fruit quality and production is increased. Commercial orchards have been pruning their trees for several weeks now. If you have some young trees of your own and are interested in taking this task on, some basic principles will get you started.

Pruning over a three- or four-year span is best for a tree's health, removing no more than one-third of the live wood in any given year.

In general, prune more in the upper than lower branches. Create a spherical shape by reducing the tree's height, cutting no more than five or six feet a year from a standard-sized tree.

To increase sunlight in the branches, thin throughout the tree.

Remove all dead (those with no buds) and diseased wood. Cut just outside the thick live wood that grew when the branch died. Burn the wood to reduce the risk of re-infestation.



Cut back healthy branches to promote vigorous growth further back on the branch. Prune out excess branches to encourage more energy into fruit production.

Promote branches that are at a horizontal angle of 45 degrees to 90 degrees. These are the optimal fruit-bearing branches. Conversely, remove branches with acute angles; these weak crotches crack and split when heavy-laden with apples.

Encourage the short fruit-bearing spur branches growing from the sides of larger branches.

Prune a branch if it droops, touches another branch, is low-growing, or hangs below another branch, grows toward the center of the tree, or grows vertically, including water sprouts, fast-growing shoots with no branches.

To watch pruning in action, view our two-part video, *Pruning New England Apple Trees*, [Part One](#) and [Part Two](#).

The growing apple business of Pastor Chuck

By RUSSELL POWELL

The applesauce is just the right thickness. The apple butter is delicately spiced. The salsa tastes like salsa, but the apple flavor still comes through.

All of the products are made from Maine apples, many of them organic, some without added sugar. It's the new, but growing, line of value-added apple products from Pastor Chuck.

In 1984, Waite Maclin, aka Pastor Chuck, started a one-acre apple orchard on his father-in-law's property in Cushing, a town of about 1,200 on the mid-coast of Maine. He planted six apple trees, and nurtured them for two years until he took a position with the Peace Corps in the Philippines.

He hired a woman to look after his trees during his three-year tour, and when he returned to Maine in 1989, "I was pleasantly surprised to discover that five of the

trees not only survived, but flourished."

The orchard grew, and Maclin began experimenting with recipes for applesauce and apple butter. They proved to be popular with his relatives, friends, and neighbors, and in 2004, "after a number of fits and starts," he launched the brand "Pastor Chuck." The name comes from the fact that Maclin is an Episcopal priest (he was also in private practice as a psychotherapist for 29 years).

Today, "Pastor Chuck" apple butter, applesauce, and apple salsa are sold nationally, and new products are in the works.

His father-in-law had planted a few apple trees on the Cushing farm, but it was a nursery catalog that started Maclin down the apple path. "One day a Stark Brothers catalog came across my desk, and I became intrigued by the possibility of planting more apple trees. After I planted the first couple of trees, I was hooked. I also planted a plum tree and some high-bush blueberries, but the apple trees provided the most pleasure."

Maclin now uses his home orchard as a testing lab for new products, as he does not grow enough apples for his products. He sources his apples from Maine orchards.

Annual meeting: June 7

MAKE NOTE!

The annual meeting of the New England Apple Association will be Tuesday, June 7, at 11:30 a.m. at J. P. Sullivan, 50 Barnum Road, Ayer, Massachusetts.

If you have an agenda item for consideration, please email info@newenglandapples.org by June 1.

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For his products that do not contain organic cane sugar, "we use the sweetest apples we can find locally," says Maclin, usually Gala and Cortland. For his sauces and butters with added sugar, he uses McIntosh and Jonagold, among other varieties.

His products are co-packed at Kime's Cider Mill in Bendersville, Pennsylvania. ("Of course we want to co-pack in Maine," Maclin says, "and that is somewhere down the road" when there are adequate facilities.)

Maclin is quick to list what he believes makes Pastor Chuck products distinctive. In no particular order:

1. "We have tight quality control. I am personally at every production.
2. "Our taste is superior in its freshness, which allows the wonderful uniqueness of the apple to come through.
3. "The colors of our products are rich, and appealing to look at on the shelf.
4. "Our products are completely natural — there are no additives or sugar substitutes, and the butters and sauces are organic. Except for the spices, all ingredients come from locally grown apples.
5. "We have three certifications — USDA Organic, Circle K Kosher and Gluten Free — through the National Foundation for Celiac Research.
6. "We use no high fructose corn syrup, which is a huge contributor to the obesity and diabetes epidemic in this country.
7. "As an Episcopal priest and retired psychotherapist, I have been in the business of nurturing people all of my working life. These apple products are just another means of nurturing people.
8. "This is an intangible, but I believe integrity comes through in our products."

Pastor Chuck's Roasted Chicken with All Natural Apple Salsa

- Lightly spread olive oil on bottom of baking dish.
- Using cold water, thoroughly wash outside and cavity of 5-lb. roasting chicken.
- Cavity stuffing
- 1 New England apple, cored and quartered
- 2 onions, halved
- other fruits, cut up (lemon, or orange, for example)
- Smother chicken with one 16-oz. jar of Pastor Chuck's All Natural Apple Salsa (with or without sugar). Cover with aluminum foil.
- Bake at 350° for 1½ hours. Remove foil, replace fallen salsa, if necessary, and return to oven. Continue baking until internal temperature reaches 180°.

More information about Pastor Chuck's products are available at

www.pastorchuckorchards.com

Initial results from new pick-your-own survey

There's still time for growers to participate!

By WESLEY R. AUTIO

The Massachusetts Fruit Growers' Association this winter initiated a survey of Massachusetts apple growers to understand the extent of pick-your-own (PYO) apples and the approaches farms take to it. A total of 113 farms were contacted and asked to participate in an online survey. As of March 7, 66 farms (58 percent) had responded, accounting for approximately 1,395 acres (about 33 percent of the total Massachusetts apple acreage). The survey is not yet complete, but already it is possible to obtain information from it.

Among responses, the average farm has 23 acres of apples. Two-thirds of those farms responding utilize PYO, and they devote about 15 acres each to PYO. About 30 percent of the PYO acreage is in dwarf trees, 50 percent in semi-dwarf, and 20 percent in standards. Only 15 percent of farms provide some form of access aid, such as ladders.

Nearly all farms utilize additional entertainment: hay rides by 94 percent, petting zoos by 53 percent, live music by 31 percent, and a corn maze by 3 percent. About one-fourth of farms charge for hay rides. Sixty-three percent of farms responding offer school tours. The average charge per student is \$4.66, with a range of zero to \$10 per student. Ten percent of farms responding charge an entry fee for customers, and 90 percent do not.

Advertising varies greatly from farm to farm. Overall, 96 percent rely somewhat on word of mouth. Forty-nine percent use email lists, and 16 percent use direct mailings. Radio ads are used by 24 percent of farms; 66 percent use newspaper ads, and 9

percent use television ads. Forty-five percent of respondents use a variety of other advertising methods, such as Google and Facebook. Those who use newspaper ads spend on average 53 percent of their advertising dollars on those ads. Those that use direct mailings spend about 30 percent on them, and those that use television spend about 30 percent on television ads. Farms that use radio ads spend about 24 percent on those ads.

Among the 44 responding farms that use PYO, 83 percent sell fruit by container. Of those, the average price per peck was \$13.17, with a range from \$7 to \$20 per peck. Twenty-six percent of farms sell at least part of their crop by weight, with an average per-pound price of \$1.30 and a range of \$1 to \$1.75.

The last question on the survey asks growers to rate their level of satisfaction with PYO on their farm. More than 10 percent of responders expressed dissatisfaction with PYO, and 22 percent were neutral. Fifty-seven percent were satisfied, and 10 percent were very satisfied with PYO.

This survey is still underway, and we expect to gather several more responses in the next few weeks.

Let your voice be heard!

All New England Apple Association members can take the survey implemented by the Massachusetts Fruit Growers' Association. We encourage everyone to participate! It takes just a few minutes of your time, and is helpful to the New England apple industry in a number of ways, from insurance regulations to grant opportunities.

Take the survey online:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/newenglandapples>

It's open to all New England apple growers and is available through Monday, May 23.

Coming soon:

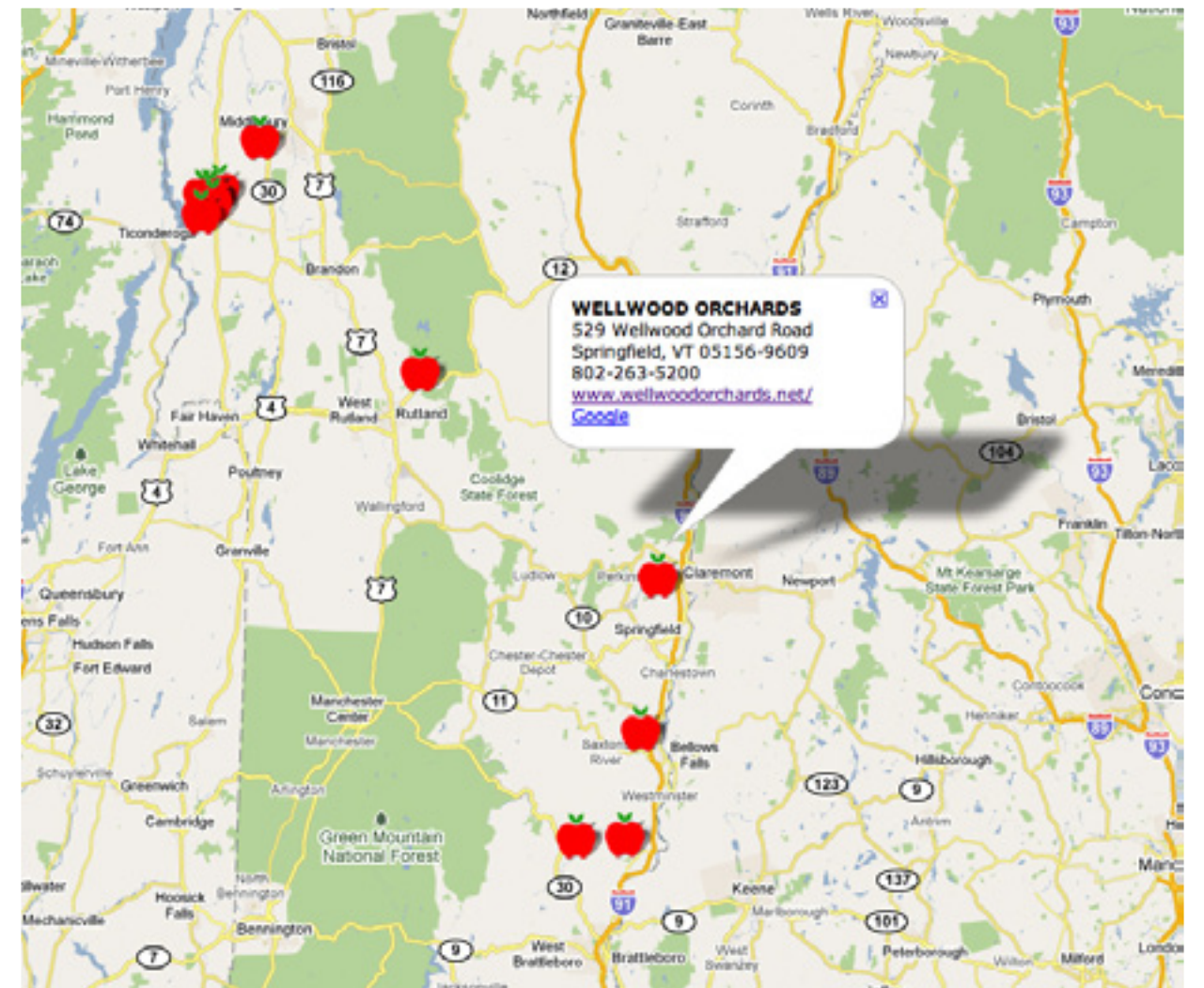
The Visual Orchard Finder

The New England Apple Association will make it easier than ever for people to find New England orchards when it launches its new Visual Orchard Finder to its website, newenglandapples.org, next month. Using Google's mapping API technology, we have built live maps of all six New England states, with pushpins for member orchards.

When the cursor is dragged over a pushpin, a bubble appears with the orchard's contact information, hours of operation, directions, a website link, and a link to the member's Google Place page. The new software is designed for Mac and PC, touch pads and all smart phones, and will work through all major browsers.

The Visual Orchard Finder will be live in a few weeks.

Orchards can update their map record by accessing their membership account at www.newenglandapples.org.



IPM methods too varied for standardization

Food grown by farmers practicing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) generally is not identified in the grocery store. Unlike organic food, there is no national certification for growers using IPM. IPM is a complex and idiosyncratic pest control strategy; there is no “one size fits all” approach to it, making it impossible to define a universal standard for all foods and all areas of the country.

Despite increased costs and lack of certification, growers are an essential part of IPM development, says Dan Cooley, a professor of microbiology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, who has been working on IPM issues for more than three decades.

“The relationship with the grower is paramount in IPM work,” Cooley says, quoting his late colleague, IPM pioneer Ron Prokopy. “Many growers are at the margin of existence, and amazingly enough, they are willing to take this risk.” With their help, he says, IPM will continue to develop.

IPM takes advantage of all appropriate pest management options, including the judicious use of pesticides. Organic growers apply many of the same principles as IPM but use only natural, rather than synthetic, chemicals.

“Organic does not mean pesticide free,” says Cooley. “Organic growers use pesticide approved by organic certification boards. IPM growers select chemicals based on their relative safety, too. Both IPM and organic growers use sprays only when needed to prevent significant pest damage.”

A sampling of Cooley’s latest work:

“For apple scab, our most important apple disease, we are looking at inoculum measurement and reduction as a way to reduce the need for fungicides, particularly the first fungicide sprays of the growing season,” says Cooley. “We are also developing weather-based models

to reduce fungicide use against our second most important disease, sooty blotch/flyspeck.

“On the insect front, we’re working on limiting insecticide sprays for plum curculio to a few trees around the borders of blocks, but attracting the insects to specific trees using pheromones and/or apple odors.

“Similarly, for apple maggot, we’re trying to improve on the sticky red sphere trap method by using a low-risk pesticide to kill maggot flies as they land. This eliminates the labor-intensive job of cleaning spheres through the growing season.

“We’re looking at new ways to monitor and control codling moth and similar lepidopteran insects. This coming season, we will combine a model for forecasting fruit thinning weather with chemicals other than carbaryl, the current standard thinning material.

“At the same time, we’re working on ways to improve IPM information delivery over the web by gathering regional weather information and to help identify optimum IPM tactics and timing. This will give growers easily understood options for pest management on a day-to-day basis.”



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