

McIntosh News



Russell Powell

Trees laden with young apples like this one at Westward Orchards in Harvard, Massachusetts, are thinned in June to allow for proper sizing and protect the limbs from bearing too much weight.

So far, so good

**There is a long way to go until harvest,
but New England's orchards have made it
successfully through spring's critical phases**



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McIntosh News is published quarterly by the New England Apple Association and distributed free to apple growers, agricultural organizations, and other friends of the New England apple industry. The nonprofit New England Apple Association is a grower-funded organization charged with raising awareness of apple varieties grown in New England.

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Orchard Run

Russell Powell, editor

2013 crop off to a promising start

THE EARLY SIGNS are good for the 2013 New England apple crop. There are still many factors that could shrink the crop between now and mid-August, when the early varieties are ready for harvest: chiefly hail, but also wind, sunburn, disease, or even too much rain. Inevitably there will be some loss.

Still, the region's apple orchards made it safely through the early phases where things can go wrong: spring bloom, which unlike a year ago and in 2010, was not unseasonably early this year; and the two- to four-week period that follows when the blossoms are vulnerable to damage from frost. While these May 23 photographs from Randall Orchards in Standish, Maine, and Brackett's Orchards in Limington, Maine, show lingering blossoms beneath brooding skies, there was generally sunny weather during bloom, allowing for good pollination, and only minor incidents of frost throughout the region.

This comes as a welcome contrast to 2012, when an early bloom resulting from a March heat wave exposed the blossoms for a longer-than-usual period, and many orchards suffered significant damage from frosts in late April and May. New England harvested only about 70 percent of a normal crop in 2012, while Michigan and New York orchards saw historic losses. New England apples, which typically are in good supply in supermarkets for ten or more months every year, are now in scarce supply as a result of the smaller crop.

But this spring, so far, the weather has cooperated, and nearly everyone is reporting a full crop. In June, that means it is time for thinning. There are too many apples on the trees for them to size properly, and limbs could be damaged from carrying too



Despite the cloud cover during late bloom and June's heavy rains, Randall Orchards in Standish, Maine, had enough sun to ensure good pollination. When the petals fall, the nascent apples, observed closely, have their own special beauty.

much fruit. Much of the thinning occurs naturally, what growers refer to as "June drop." Hand thinning or the application of synthetic thinners supplements this.

Another threat to the apple crop is deer, which view the trees as giant salads. Many growers install fences around their orchards at great expense to keep the deer out. Sure enough, on the afternoon of June 11, when these photographs were taken at Westward Orchard in Harvard, Massachusetts, a deer bounded away just outside the eight- to ten-foot fence bordering the orchard.

Safe from predators, the trees, teeming with small, developing apples amid rich, green foliage, show once again that the beauty of the orchard is for all seasons.



Photographs by Russell Powell



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Young apples form amid the lush foliage and graceful limbs of apple trees in late spring at Westward Orchards (above) and Carlson Orchards (right), both in Harvard, Massachusetts.



Even on a cloudy day, the view through apple trees looking east from the highest ridge at Brackett's Orchards in Limington, Maine, toward Ossipee Mountain in Waterboro, is serene.




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2013 New England Apple Day Wednesday, September 4

New England Apple Association is pleased to announce the date for the 2013 New England Apple Day: Wednesday, September 4. This New England-wide apple harvest kick-off event is planned at a critical time for apple growers.

Our Association launched the event four years ago in Massachusetts. New England Apple Day is a great way to maximize publicity and draw attention to the

fresh harvest around the time McIntosh and many other popular varieties are ready for picking.

The commissioners of agriculture in each of the New England states will visit orchards, packing-houses, or cider mills on New England Apple Day to meet with growers, producers, and media, learn about the 2013 crop, and most-importantly, enjoy a fresh-picked apple.

Celebrate the fresh harvest with us at the Big E - September 13-30

This year the 17-day Eastern States Exposition begins Friday, September 13, and the New England Apple Association will again have a booth in the Massachusetts State Building. The Association will be promoting the fresh harvest with apples and baked goods, as well as the Association's full-color 2014 New England Apples wall calendar.

Bar Weeks will manage the New England Apple Association booth that will feature items from a number of Massachusetts orchards and businesses, including:

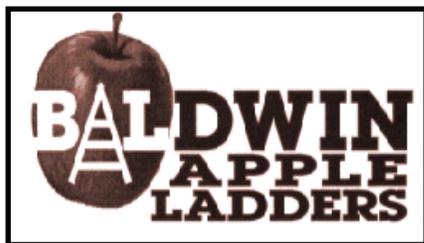
Fresh apples from **Atkins Farms** in Amherst, **Brookfield Orchards** in North Brookfield, **Carlson Orchards** in Harvard, **Cold Spring Orchard** in Belchertown, **Pine Hill Orchards** in Colrain, **Red Apple Farm** in Phillipston, and **Tougas Family Farm** in Northborough;

Cider donuts from **Atkins Farms** in Amherst;

Fresh apple cider from **Carlson Orchards** in Harvard; and

Apple crisp and pies from **Cook's Orchard** in Brimfield.

Contact Bar at bar@newenglandapples.org if your Massachusetts orchard would like to donate apples in exchange for signage at the fair, which attracted more than one million visitors last year.



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O'Neill named Chair, Faubert joins Board

The Board of Directors of the New England Apple Association unanimously elected Ned O'Neill as chair at its annual meeting June 11 in Ayer, Massachusetts. O'Neill, vice president of J. P. Sullivan & Co., replaces Gordon Waterman of Romac Sales in Acton, Maine. Waterman will remain on the board.

Website growth strong, improvements planned

The Association website, newenglandapples.org, continues to show strong growth, with hits for the first five months of 2013 up 58 percent from a year ago, to 501,939, compared to 316,789 in 2012. Visitors to the site for the same time period totaled 18,452 compared to 11,236 for the first five months of 2012, a 64 percent increase.

The first six months of the calendar year historically are the slowest, so the increases to more than 3,600 visitors and more than 100,000 hits per month bode well for the year. In 2012, the site attracted more than 39,000 visitors and nearly 1.4 million hits.

The Association will continue to invest in the site with fresh content and improved features to meet this increased consumer demand for information about New England apples and orchards. Some changes, such as improved home-page navigation and design, will be in place by September.

"We are pleased with the rate of growth," says Executive Director Bar Weeks, "but we cannot rest on our laurels. To meet consumer demand, we are committed to providing an attractive, easy-to-navigate website using current technology."

Enhancements to the site underway include new video programs on integrated pest management and the changing orchard; applications for mobile computing devices; interactive educational games for elementary and high school-age children; and an expanded database of New England apple varieties.

"The new site will be accessible any time, anywhere," says Weeks, "while reaching out to the next generation of consumers."

Summer 2013

Mo Tougas of Tougas Family Farm in Northborough, Massachusetts, will continue as vice-chair of the board, and John Rogers of Rogers Orchards in Southington, Connecticut, will again serve as secretary-treasurer.

Although she was unable to attend the meeting, the board also welcomed Heather Faubert as a member of the nine-person board. Faubert, extension fruit specialist at the University of Rhode Island, becomes the Association's first representative from Rhode Island. Rhode Island Fruit Growers' Association (RIFGA) honored Faubert in May for her work with Integrated Pest Management (IPM), with an award and a lifetime membership to the RIFGA.

Faubert has worked with Rhode Island's fruit growers on pest control since joining URI in 1982, and has helped reduce orchard chemical use by 30 percent in the past 30 years.

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America's Apple



Russell Steven Powell
With photographs by Bar Lois Weeks

“*America’s Apple* is a thorough and informative tour of the landscape of American apples in the 21st century and a sympathetic portrait of the intrepid New England farmers who grow them.”

— Hannah Nordhaus, author of *The Beekeeper’s Lament*

“If you love apples (and who doesn’t?), this book will interest you. It’s a colorful story about the culture of apples, sweet with plenty of juicy details, a crisp prose style and tart observations.”

—The Moosewood Collective, owners of Moosewood Restaurant, celebrating 40 years of operation in Ithaca, New York, and authors of 13 natural foods cookbooks

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2013

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- ★ Two Pie Categories: Apple Only and Apple & Other Ingredients
- ★ Criteria include: appearance, presentation, crust, texture and flavor!
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