

NEW ANTIQUE AND DIFFERENT APPLES

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Massachusetts has a long history of apple production. Over the past few years the dynamics of apple production have changed, due in large part to the rapid expansion of apple production overseas, especially in the southern hemisphere and a logarithmic increase in production in China. While New England has a climate that favors the production of high quality apples, other geographic locations produce significantly higher yields per acre because of high light conditions, a long growing season and abundant water. Consequently, apple production has shifted in New England from one dominated by wholesale production to one that is focused on direct sales to the public. This situation provides growers with a unique opportunity to offer directly to the public a variety of fruits and different varieties of apple that are usually not available to the public at conventional grocery stores.

New varieties of apples are being released periodically from breeding programs or are being discovered as chance seedlings. However, unlike in the past where the best varieties were made available to growers, club varieties and other permutations restrict the availability on new varieties to a few growers. While it is acknowledged that the availability of the best varieties will be restricted, there are many new and old varieties available that may be different and have unique characteristics that make them attractive choices to grow. These varieties may have a flaw that precludes their selection as a club variety but this flaw may be irrelevant when sold locally and for a limited period of time.

Consumers are looking for variety in the produce section and they are very interested in purchasing new and unique apple varieties and this is especially true for individuals who frequently shop at roadside stands. We have documented this in a recent survey and based upon the results of this survey we are presenting a strategy for operators of roadside stands to benefit and capitalize on consumer interest in new apple varieties. Most roadside stands are open throughout the growing season. We have divided the apple sales season into five different marketing periods. We suggest that growers plant at least two new and different varieties for each marketing period. Plant only enough of a variety to last for no more than a month. This is a safe approach and there is the added advantage of creating the perception of the need to buy apples now before the supply runs out. Customers can be introduced to several new varieties throughout the season. Have a featured variety every week or two. It is important that customers be given the opportunity to taste these new varieties. A downside is that you must learn to grow, harvest and market varieties where there is little information. There is a learning curve, but once you have this knowledge, you will have an advantage. Customer tastes and preferences differ thus making it necessary to offer variety. It was found in the survey and confirmed in the literature that 16% of customers like sweet apples, 48% prefer sweet/tart apples, 30% like tart/sweet while the remaining 6% select tart apples. It is important to recognize that you do not have to have apples that everyone likes. Avid lovers of a variety may frequent a roadside stand simply to purchase one variety that is unavailable elsewhere.

Marketing Periods and New/Antique /Different Varieties for each marketing period.

August 15 to August 30

Redfree
Ginger Gold
Sansa
Zestar!™
Paulared

September 1 to September 15

Akane
Sweetango™ (restricted)
Silken
Arlet (Swiss Gourmet)

September 15 to September 30

CrimsonCrisp
Shamrock
An early Fuji (Daybreak, September Wonder, Rising Sun)
NY 428
Golden Supreme

October 1 to October 15

Creston
NJ 90
Hudson's Golden Gem
Hampshire
Shizuka
Topaz

After October 15

Cameo
CandyCrisp
SunCrisp
GoldRush
Pink Lady (Cripps Pink)

Antique varieties worthy of consideration

Golden Russet
Northern Spy
Baldwin
Hawkeye Delicious
Esopus Spitzenburg