

---

## Fruit Tree Selection in Nebraska

**APPLES** - Apple trees are quite hardy and will do well in most sites across Eastern Nebraska. Criteria which are important when selecting varieties are: harvest time and quality, suitability for the uses you desire, proper rootstock selection, disease resistance to apple scab and cedar apple rust, and proper pollination sources. Very early summer apples especially older varieties like Lodi, Pippin, and McIntosh have a very short shelf life. If you are gone for the weekend you may have left when they were green and returned when they are past prime. Newer varieties of early season apples like Jerseymac, Zestar, Pristine, Gala's, and Earlichief have improved quality.

Many homeowners want smaller trees, so apple varieties are bud grafted onto dwarfing rootstock. The dwarf rootstocks inhibit the growth, because they are not as vigorous and hardy. You have to be careful of this in Nebraska's environment. Select trees with MM111, MM106, or Bud-118 rootstocks. These produce trees 60-70% of full size and still have adequate rooting activity to handle Nebraska. Apple scab and cedar apple rust are abundant in Nebraska.

You will notice that many crab apple trees are almost devoid of leaves by late August because of apple scab. McIntosh types tend to be quite susceptible to scab, Jonathon types are often susceptible to cedar apple rust, Delicious type apples are fairly resistant. Pristine, a newer apple from Purdue Rutgers Illinois breeding program, has a excellent disease resistance. Pollination in apples should not be a problem if you have another variety out of the family and not on opposite extremes of the blooming season. Trees should be planted on 20 feet squares unless some system of pruning or training is used to increase density. Many commercial orchards today are moving to high density planting on wire to reduce harvest ladder work and improve percentage of high value fruit.

**PEARS** - Do not use dwarf root stock. Select at least two varieties, three would be better. Space like apples. Make sure varieties have good resistance to fire blight. Varieties well suited to Nebraska are Moonglow, Luscious, Harrow Sweet, Magness, or Seckel.

**APRICOTS** - They make a very hardy landscape tree which may surprise you once every ten years or so and produce fruit. They are self-pollinating. The only variety which may give you fruit more often would be Harglow which blooms about 5 days later than other varieties.

**CHERRIES** - The problem with sweet cherries is keeping the tree alive long enough to bear fruit. In very protected locations varieties like Gold or Black Gold could give you a chance. Tart (pie) cherries do well in Nebraska. North Star is a natural dwarf type. Other varieties are Meteor, Montmorency, and Surefire.

**PEACHES** - In protected locations, peaches like Reliance, Red Haven, Contender and Madison might be hardy enough to give some yield over the years. Most peaches in rural areas only live 5-7 years, which is barely enough time to get production started. Peaches start readily from seed. While you never know until the first harvest what the peach will be like, some of the most productive trees have come by this method. A little care and a bit of luck and some have found success. Nectarines are a little harder to grow than peaches in Nebraska. Hardired has about the same hardiness as the Reliance peach.

**PLUMS** - Plums are just slightly hardier than peaches. Newer varieties like Early Golden, EarliMagic, Toka, Methley, and Ozark Premier could be chosen. Older varieties include Stanley and Italian prune, Green Gage, and Damson.

**QUINCE**- For the jam makers quince bushes are very hardy and bloom late enough to always produce a crop in Nebraska. The two bushes in my yard have done very well.

**KIWIS** - Have not proved hardy and well adapted enough to be considered for Nebraska acreages. For further information review Fruit Tree Cultivars for Nebraska.

Paul C Hay, Extension Educator

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Gage County • 1115 West Scott Street, Beatrice NE 68310

(402) 223-1384 • FAX: (402) 223-1370 • email: [phay1@unl.edu](mailto:phay1@unl.edu)

