

## National Apple Day

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October 21 is National Apple Day; a day to celebrate one of the world's most popular fruits. Apples have been around for centuries with some evidence suggesting they were cultivated as far back as 6500 BC.

According to Vaughn Hammond, past Extension Educator, from the late 1800s into the early 1900s Nebraska was a nationally recognized fruit-producing state. Nebraska's move toward fruit production began in the mid-1850s as pioneers crossed the Missouri River at Brownville.

Publications from the Nebraska Horticultural Society, which began publishing yearly proceedings in the 1850s, tell us that during this period Judge J. W. Hall of Brownville planted the first apple tree in what was to be the state of Nebraska.

The variety was unknown, but reportedly the tree had yellow fruit and amazing vigor with production beginning 17 months after planting. The vigor and quality were attributed to the rich soil of the region and our fruit industry was born. This began to change with the Great Depression and Armistice Day freeze on November 11, 1940.

During the late 1930's into 1940 Nebraska had a prolonged drought. The growing season of 1940 was very warm and dry and the first freeze normally experienced in October never came. When rain began to fall, fruit trees pulled in the moisture. When temperatures dropped overnight from the 60s to below zero, this caused tree trunks to rupture as the water inside froze.

Hundreds of acres of commercial and home orchards were destroyed. Between cleanup costs and the economic times, few trees were replaced and orchards were converted to row crops. Today, apples remain one of our specialty crops and Nebraskans have renewed interest in planting fruit trees.

If you have apple trees, here are a couple of tips for this time of year. If you're thinking about pruning an apple tree, wait until late winter or early spring to do this task. Fall is not the time of year to prune woody plants like fruit and shade trees or evergreen conifers. After leaves drop from trees would be a good time to inspect a tree for pruning needs, but wait until late winter to prune apples.

Now is a good time for fall sanitation. Pick up and discard fallen apples or apple mummy's still hanging in a tree. This fall task can help reduce insects and diseases that may overwinter on fruit, or emerge from fallen fruit to overwinter in soil. Know that applying a pesticide to soil at this time of year will not reduce apple pests next season.

If considering planting apple trees next spring, two different cultivars are needed. Apples are self-unfruitful, meaning they're not pollinated by their own pollen. For fruit production, two compatible cultivars of the same type of fruit tree need to be grown fairly close together.

Crabapple and apple are related and will pollinate one another; however, different types of most fruit trees will not pollinate each other. A cherry will not pollinate an apricot, nor will a pear pollinate an apple. And different cultivars of the same tree need to be compatible, usually meaning they bloom at the same time.

For information on which cultivars are good pollinizers for one another, refer to our Nebraska Extension Nebguide "Fruit Tree Cultivars for Nebraska" available at [extensionpubs.unl.edu](http://extensionpubs.unl.edu). We also have an Extension circular on Fruit Tree Pruning.

Apples are susceptible to a number of foliar diseases and fruit invading insects. Selecting disease resistant cultivars can greatly reduce foliar diseases, but plan on battling insect pests or at least sharing some of your fruit with them. When planning fruit tree plantings, don't overlook the need for disease and insect management and how this will be approached.