



A Garden Compass Re-Publication

...by Dave Wilson Nursery 



AN OLD ROSE:

The Apple

BY ED LAIVO

*The rose is a rose,
And was always a rose.
But the theory now goes
That the apple's a rose,
And the pear is, and so's
The plum, I suppose.
The dear only knows
What will next prove a rose.
You, of course, are a rose -
But were always a rose.*
— Robert Frost

Rosaceae, the rose family, is vast, complex and downright confusing at times.

This complexity has no better exemplar than the prince of the rose family, Malus, better known as the apple. The apple is older in cultivation than the rose. It presents all the extremes in color, size, fragrance and plant character of its rose cousin plus an important added benefit—flavor!

One can find apples to suit nearly every taste and cultural demand. Without any special care, apples grow where no roses dare. Hardy varieties like the Pippins, Pearmain, Snow, Lady and Northern Spy have been grown successfully in many different climates across the U.S.

With 8,000-plus varieties worldwide and with new ones introduced annually, apple collectors in most climates are like kids in a candy store.

New, Favorite and Powerhouse Apples



New introductions such as Honeycrisp, Cameo and Pink Lady are adapted to a wide range of climates and are beginning to be planted in large quantities. Each one is a unique eating experience that satisfies a modern taste—crunchy firmness, plenty of sweetness and tantalizing flavor.

These new varieties show promise in the competition for the #1 spot in the world's produce sections and farmers' markets.

They compete with the current powerhouse varieties Fuji, Red Fuji, Gala and Braeburn, which, along with Granny Smith and Jonagold, have been the "new" varieties for the past ten years. These old "new" varieties had previously pushed aside the Red and Yellow Delicious, McIntosh and Newtown Pippin, which had dominated the market for many years. Before these, the Rome Beauty,

Winesap and Jonathan held the predominant places in the produce market.

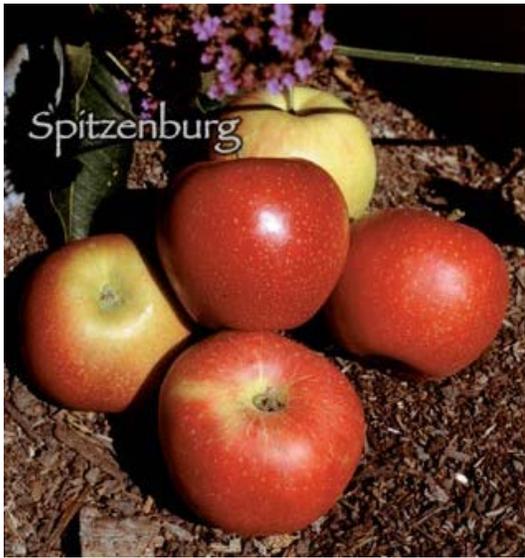


The rich flavors of old favorites like **Spitzenburg** and **Golden Russet** are always a pleasant surprise for inexperienced tasters.

Old and antique apples distinguish themselves with unusual skin colors and lingering aftertastes that demand another bite.



Varieties like **Northern Spy** (New York, 1800), **Bramley's Seedling** (England, 1813) and **Ashmead's Kernel** (England, 1700) are wonderful when eaten off the tree.



As with the rose, there is an ongoing quest by hybridists to develop and introduce new, improved varieties in hopes of launching the next new powerhouse variety.

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Golden Russet and Spitzenburg are as different in flavor from Red and Golden Delicious as the Delicious are from Fuji and Gala.

New apple varieties never quite completely overshadow the old ones because, as with roses, a variety is new only until the next variety comes along and takes its place. Then the variety must truly stand on its merits—newness no longer recommends it.

Old and Distinguished Apples

Old and antique apples distinguish themselves with unusual skin colors, a wide range of unique flavors and lingering aftertastes that demand another bite. Many are more than a hundred years old. Varieties like **Northern Spy** (New York, 1800), **Bramley's Seedling** (England, 1813) and **Ashmead's Kernal** (England, 1700) are wonderful when eaten off the tree, and, along with **Belle de Boskoop** (Holland 1856), are renowned for being superior apples for juicing. **Calville Blanc** (Germany, 1598) has long been one of the top-selling apples grown in Europe for fresh eating, juicing and cooking.

Many old varieties such as **Black Gillflower** (New York, 1840), **King of Tompkins** (aka King, New York, 1800) and **Swaar** (New York, 1804), have survived due to their wonderful, distinctive flavors, their adaptation to various climatic conditions and/or their resistance to disease.



California Apples — Low Chill Varieties

Hundreds of apple varieties are adapted to cold winter climates — including the full range of colors, flavors and harvest seasons. There are fewer apples adapted to warm winter climates (chill hours below 500), like those we experience in California, but home growers in these areas still have a remarkable selection of fine quality, tried-and-true varieties. Recently, Fuji and Gala have proven themselves in all of Southern California except for the lowest chill areas of the coast.

Southern California favorites **Anna**, **Dorsett Golden** and **Ein Shemer** have performed well in areas that receive little or no winter chill, including the low desert. Knowledgeable apple growers are incredulous when they see thriving Anna apple trees with firm, pretty, delicious fruit in places like Thermal, CA.

Anna has a sweet flavor similar to Red Delicious; Dorsett Golden has a flavor similar to Golden Delicious.

Ein Shemer needs no chill at all and sets heavy crops of small, mildly sweet, flavorful apples.

Gordon, discovered in Whittier, CA, is a proven variety for Southern California, having chill needs similar to Fuji and Gala.



There are also antique varieties adapted to warm winter climates.

Pettingill, **Yellow Bellflower** and **Winter Banana** — along with the hardy White Winter Pearmain, are all long-time favorites of Southern California apple hobbyists. Each of these antique apples has a unique, indescribable flavor that has made it a perpetual favorite.

Pettingill, discovered in Long Beach, CA in 1949, at one time **was the #1 apple planted in Southern California.**

Best Varieties for Disease Resistance

Apple varieties have their share of disease problems which must be prevented or managed. A few varieties have good resistance to the common problems of scab, powdery mildew and fireblight.

Liberty, a McIntosh type, is resistant to all of these diseases and has great flavor as well!

Freedom, regarded as a sister tree to Liberty because of its exceptional disease resistance and great flavor comes from the same hybridizing program in New York. (Because of its newness, Freedom may be difficult to find in the markets, but stay tuned.)

Under some conditions, a grower will have to deal with all of these common diseases, though usually one is more of a problem than the others.

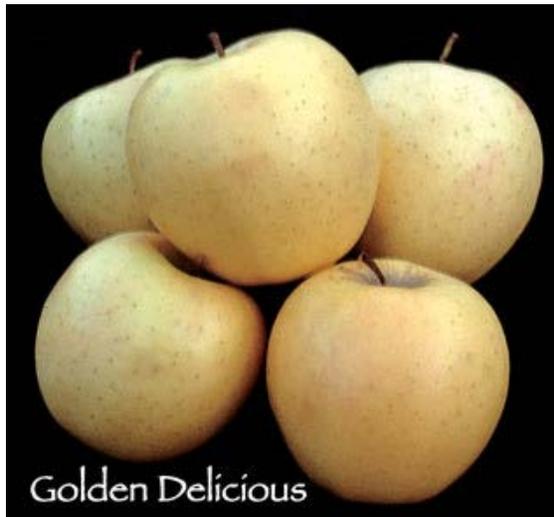
For some varieties, the main problem is susceptibility to premature fruit drop due to summer heat. As with the rose, variety selection is the key to growing apples successfully. This means not limiting your choices to the most readily available varieties—instead, seek nurseries that carry a larger selection.

Learn the main disease problems in your area before selecting a tree and be aware of cultural practices and spray programs that can help to lessen or eliminate the problems.

Find a retail nursery that is knowledgeable about apple growing. Contact your agricultural extension office for local recommendations.

All around the United States there are specialty growers of apple trees offering selections for a variety of climates and conditions. Search the Internet or send for catalogs advertised in magazines.

The rose, due to its incomparable beauty and wonderful fragrance, is the cornerstone plant of modern gardening and the namesake of the largest family in the plant world. But, as throughout history, the apple is the real provider of the family, and, of course, is a rose, and was always a rose.



Best California Apples

California Central Valley
Bakersfield north to Chico

Coastal California
North from San Luis Obispo to Oregon

Northern California
North of Santa Rosa

Southern California
South of Santa Clarita to San Diego

The Sierra Nevada
Above 2500 feet

California Central Valley
Bakersfield north to Chico
Marginal apple growing region: premature apple drop and sunburn can be a problem. Fireblight is also common.

- Akane (outstanding red dessert)
- Arkansas Black (dark red skin)
- Dorsett Golden (very early golden)
- Empire (red with white flesh)
- Fuji or Red Fuji (very sweet)
- Gala (sub-acid sweet)
- Golden Delicious (yellow traditional)
- Granny Smith (green)
- Pink Lady (late, very sweet)
- Sundowner (new late ripening)
- Sierra Beauty (fresh eating or cooking)
- Yellow Newtown Pippin (green, fresh eating or cooking)

Southern California
south of Santa Clarita to San Diego
Marginal apple growing region, low chill required, 100 to 400 hours of chill OK for all but the coast. Some areas are similar to central valley (Cherry Valley, Yucaipa and Anza). Fireblight can be a problem.

- Anna (green with red blush)
- Beverly Hills (fresh eating or cooking)
- Dorsett Golden (golden)
- Ein Shemer (yellow)
- Fuji (green-yellow)
- Gala (sub acid)

Coastal California
north from San Luis Obispo to Oregon
Great apple growing region, some disease problems: powdery mildew, scab and fireblight in particular. Most all the varieties that do well in Northern California do well on the coast and are worth trying.

- Braeburn (orange-red blush)
- Cameo (bright red stripes over cream color)

- Gordon (green blushed red)
- Granny Smith (green)
- Pettingill (red over green skin)
- Winter Banana (flavor suggests banana)
- White Winter Pearmain (all purpose fruit)

**Northern California
North of Santa Rosa**

Prime apple growing region: diseases like scab, powdery mildew and fireblight can be a problem.

- Ashmeads Kernel (russet),
- Arkansas Black (dark red skin),
- Belle de Boskoop (dessert, cooking)
- Cox Orange Pippin (distinctive flavor)
- Fuji (green yellow with orange-red blush)
- Red Fuji (Red skin)
- Gala (Yellow, light red blush)
- Golden Delicious (old standard)
- Golden Russet (russet)
- Gravenstein (most popular in Sonoma county)
- Granny Smith (green, best when picked after Nov 1)
- Honey Crisp (New, high disease resistance)
- Liberty (red, great disease resistance)
- Pink Lady (pink skin)
- Pink Pearl (pink fleshed)
- Winter Banana (pale yellow with beautiful rosy pink blush)
- Yellow Newtown Pippin (green-yellow, cooking, cider, fresh eating)
- Spitzenburg (connoisseurs favorite)

**Many others.....too many to list!
These are just ones
that are a little easier to find.**

- Mutsu (large, greenish yellow)
- Tompkins King (dessert, pies, sauces, and cider)
- Jonagold (Jonathan x Golden Delicious)
- White Winter Pearmain (greenish-yellow)

Surprisingly, many varieties with higher chill do well in milder coastal climates (this does not mean directly on the coast)

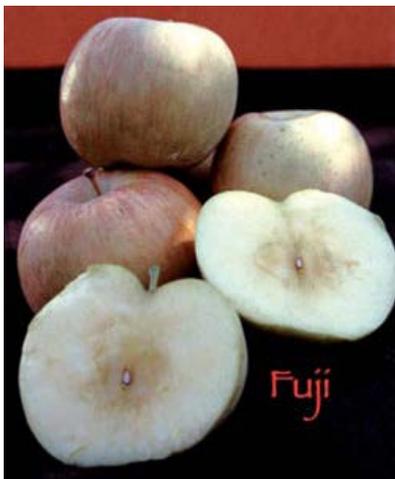
The Sierra Nevada

(above 2500 feet)

Great apple growing region. Cold hardy required above 2500 ft. Scab can be a problem. Most of the apples suited for northern California will do well in the Sierra foothills (*below* 2500 ft.) Many recommended for northern California are cold hardy. *These are all late blooming and extremely cold hardy:*

- Baldwin (large winter)
- Cortland (striped dark red skin)
- Empire (creamy white flesh)
- Haralson (red striped to deep red)
- Liberty (shiny red skin)
- McIntosh (old standard)
- Snow (McIntosh parent)
- Wolf River (extremely large)

Mail order sources for apple trees



[Bay Laurel Nursery](#)

2500 El Camino Real
Atascadero, CA 93422
805.466.6455

[Raintree Nursery](#)

391 Butts Road
Morton, WA 98356
360.496.6400

[Sonoma Antique Apple Nursery](#)

now known as: **[Trees of Antiquity](#)**
20 Wellsona Road
Paso Robles, CA 93446
805.467.9909

