



Apple Activities



The Four Seasons of Growing Apples

Winter

The winter months are relatively slow for apple growers. In January the apple grower begins pruning, cutting and trimming branches off trees. Pruning is important so that apple trees develop strong framewoods to resist damage from windstorms and heavy snow, and to bear the load of the fruit. Pruning also makes for easier spraying and picking and allows sunlight to reach apples in the middle of the tree in the coming summer.

Spring

In the spring, apple growers prepare to plant new trees. Apple growers buy young apple trees from nurseries. Most trees planted today are dwarf trees and don't grow very tall. Dwarf trees are easier to care for and their height allows for much easier picking. In the late spring, buds - the beginnings of leaves - begin to swell. Grass is mowed so that it doesn't use up all of the water and nutrients that the trees need. Apple growers monitor pests in their orchards and begin spraying if necessary.

In late May and early June, the fragrant apple blossoms come into bloom. The presence of bees is crucial this time of year because they are responsible for pollinating the blossoms. Bees gather pollen from one blossom and carry it to another blossom. Ultimately, fertilization occurs. A fertilized blossom will eventually become an apple. Bees are so important in this stage that many apple growers rent hives of bees to place in their orchards so they can be assured of having enough bees.

Summer

During July and August, apple growers hope for rain to provide the trees with lots of water. Apples need cool nights in August to make them bright red in colour. Apple growers continue mowing, spraying and pruning. Pests and diseases must be controlled so that quality fruit is produced. Pesticides and fungicides are sprayed on trees only when necessary to control certain insects and diseases. Apple growers also use an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) system to control insects. This means that growers take advantage of natural predators that hunt pests to limit the number of pests in their orchards.

Apple growers will often do some thinning during the summer months. Thinning involves removing some of the fruit from the tree to improve the size of the remaining fruit. Since the amount of nutrients and growing room available to maturing apples is limited, the greater the number of apples, the smaller each apple will be. In addition, thinning also lightens the load on branches so that they do not split or break.



Autumn

The fall is harvest time for Nova Scotia apples. As apples bruise easily, they must be handpicked. Immediately after the apples are picked they are transported to warehouses all over Nova Scotia, where they are placed in large refrigerated rooms to stay fresh. The apples are eaten fresh, exported to various countries, or processed into juice, pies, sauce, and other apple products.

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