



Fall in the Orchard—Collecting Uncommon Apples

Eighty percent of apple varieties unique to North America are no longer available—but you can discover, encourage, graft and grow uncommon apples.

The bad news—over 15,000 apple varieties were once grown in the United State, but today only eleven varieties produce 90% of the apples sold in chain grocery stores. The good news—our southern Appalachian mountains are a rich source of old fashioned varieties along with many “wildings” worthy of saving.

As Ben Watson, author and apple enthusiast says, “Increase your apple literacy.” Here’s what you can do:

Enjoy Uncommon Apples

Ask for tasty heirlooms at your Farmer’s Market or local farm stand. Organize an apple tasting with fruit from your market, your back yard or “found” apples from old farms and parks. Try a new apple in a favorite recipe and notice the difference.

Discover Uncommon Apples

Become an Apple Rustler—find apples growing on abandoned farms, public parks and even cemeteries and try to identify the variety. Visit orchards and nurseries to learn about uncommon apples, and solicit help in identifying your discoveries. Read a few of the many great books on apples listed below.

Grow Uncommon Apples

Late fall is the best time to plant trees. Chop down that Bradford Pear and plant an apple tree. Check out one of the resources listed below, or research nurseries that offer uncommon in your corner of the world.

Resources

Orchards, nurseries and sources for help with apple identification:

Vintage Virginia Apples—apple nursery, fresh apples and home to Albemarle Ciderworks

Century Farm Orchards—nursery specializing in old southern apples

Foggy Ridge Cider—website with recipes, grafting wood and information

Levering Orchard—Historic orchard, fresh apples and u-pick

Reading

Apples: A Catalogue of International Varieties, Tom Burford

Apples, Roger Yepsin

Forgotten Fruits Manual & Manifesto—Compiled and edited by Gary Paul Nabhan

Old Southern Apples, Lee Calhoun

See www.foggyridgecider.com for more resources, books and recipes.

“Fine fruit...is the most perfect union of the useful and the beautiful that the earth knows.”

A.J. Downing, The Fruits and Fruit Trees of America, 1865
