

Home Fruit Cultivars for Southern Wisconsin

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Gardeners can successfully grow many kinds of fruit in southern Wisconsin. However, prospective home fruit growers should consider carefully the space, time, and costs involved before investing in plants. Those without sufficient time and commitment to properly care for a planting will be disappointed in the result.

Choosing a cultivar is one of the most important decisions in establishing a fruit crop. Planting unproven and untested cultivars can be both discouraging and expensive. Relatively rare cultivars must be ordered from specialized nurseries. Cultivars listed in this publication are generally available from reputable local garden centers and nurseries, as well as mail-order nurseries. A list of some local and national nurseries is provided at the end of this publication.

Planting the proper cultivar and caring for it go hand in hand. A poor cultivar will always be poor regardless of the care it receives, but a good cultivar will not do well if it receives poor care. For information on how to plant, prune, and maintain fruit plants, see specific bulletins listed herein, visit the Wisconsin Fruit website at www.fruit.wisc.edu, or contact your county Extension office listed at www.uwex.edu.

Planting nectarines, Japanese plums, European grapes, boysenberries, or winter-tender cultivars of other fruits in Wisconsin is not recommended. These crops lack the hardiness to survive Wisconsin's frigid winters. Temperatures below -15°F will kill fruit buds. Over a period of years, woody stems and trunks of trees will be winter injured, leading to disease susceptibility and eventually to early death.

It is best to obtain plants from a reputable nursery to ensure that the plant materials are free from disease and true to name. Many plant diseases are spread by taking plant materials from infected older plantings. Some



diseases are not readily apparent when the plants are dug or propagated, but the symptoms appear later.

In this publication, cultivars are arranged in order of ripening within each category. For a glossary of terms, refer to page 21.

TREE FRUITS

APPLES

A single apple tree will not bear fruit. Plant at least two compatible cultivars to provide for cross-pollination and adequate fruit set. Oftentimes, nurseries offer new strains (sports) of some of the cultivars listed. These strains may have superior fruit color, spur-type growth, or other desirable characteristics, but fruit flavor, size, and harvest date usually remain similar to the original strain. They should not be used as pollinizers for the original strain. The all-red or highly colored strains tend to exhibit slightly earlier maturity dates than the original strain. New strains generally are satisfactory for home plantings. See UW-Extension Publication *Growing Apples in Wisconsin* (A3565) for more information.

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For backyards, apple cultivars propagated on a dwarfing or semi-dwarfing rootstock are suggested. The B.9, M.9, G.11, G.41, M.26, G.935, G.30, or M.7 rootstocks are satisfactory for residential planting. An interstem rootstock such as M.9, B.9, or G.11 in combination with MM.111 can be used to obtain stable root systems and semi-dwarf size.

- **AUTUMN CRISP** A bright red, medium-large, non-browning apple. The fruit is very crisp and juicy, and the flavor is slightly sweeter than tart. Trees are easy to grow. Fruit ripens in late September.

- **CANDY CRISP** Golden skin with a pinkish blush, the apples are large, very sweet, and have a crisp texture. The fruit can be stored up to four months in refrigeration (32-45°F). The trees are moderately disease resistant and bear fruit annually. Fruit ripens in early October.

- **CORTLAND** A McIntosh offspring with very good quality fruit. The tender flesh is slow to brown, and the tangy-sweet flavor is good for fresh use and baking. This annual bearing tree has a weeping, willowy growth habit. It is winter-hardy, but is susceptible to apple scab. Red sports such as Redcort and Royalcort are similar, but the fruit ripens earlier and the trees have shorter lifespans. Fruit ripens in late September.

- **EMPIRE** A high-quality, McIntosh-type, medium to small red apple with firm, crisp, and juicy flesh. Good for fresh use, and fruit stores well for three to five months. Trees are productive and medium-sized, with a spur-type growth habit; very susceptible to apple scab, but tolerant of fire blight. Fruit ripens in early October.

- **EVERCRISP** EverCrisp is sweet and crisp, similar to Honeycrisp, making it highly desirable in terms of flavor and texture. The fruit has a long shelf-life of three months or more. Trees are moderately vigorous and highly productive. Fruit ripens in mid- to late October.

- **FROSTBITE** With an intense sweet, aromatic flavor, the small red apple is great for drying (chips) and cider. Storage life is about three months. The trees are very winter-hardy, moderately vigorous, and spreading. Fruit ripens in early October.

- **GOLDEN DELICIOUS** First discovered in West Virginia, this flavorful variety is related to Red Delicious in name only. Medium to large fruit with yellowish-green skin, turning light-yellow at maturity. The flesh is tender, juicy, and yellow-white with outstanding flavor when mature. Fruit is excellent for fresh uses, baking, and freezing. However, the fruit shrivels rapidly in low-humidity storage conditions. The trees are medium-sized and marginally winter-hardy. Fruit ripens in mid- to late October.

- **HONEYCRISP** Long-stemmed, large fruit with a red blush over a yellow background. The flesh is exceptionally crisp and juicy with a mild, sweet flavor. The fruit stays crisp even after storage; however, this variety is notorious for fruit quality disorders such as bitter pit. The trees are moderately vigorous and upright in growing habit with a strong alternate-bearing trait. Trees are winter-hardy, even in USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 3. Fruit ripens in late September.

- **JERSEYMAC** This red, McIntosh-type apple has excellent flavor for fresh use. Fruit only lasts in storage for two to three weeks at most. The trees are very large and susceptible to fire blight and scab. Fruit ripens in late August.

- **JONAGOLD** Producing large fruit, similar to Golden Delicious, the skin is yellow with a red blush on the exposed side. Used as a dessert apple, the creamy yellow flesh has an outstanding sweet flavor, and the fruit stores well. Jonagold is a triploid apple and should not be used as a pollinizer. Any diploid apple flowering at the same time (except Golden Delicious) will serve as a pollinizer. Trees are moderately winter-hardy. Fruit ripens in mid-October.

- **KINDERKRISP** Produces small- to medium-sized very crisp apples, perfect for a single serving or kids' lunches. Best eaten fresh; balanced sweet flavors similar to Honeycrisp. The trees are precocious and can start bearing fruit within the first three years after planting. Fruit ripens in late August.

- **LODI** An early, large, light green or yellow apple with tart, tender flesh. Best for pies or sauce—not for storage. The trees are large, upright, and very susceptible to fire blight. This cultivar tends to be alternate bearing, with a heavy crop one year, followed by a light crop the next year. Fruit ripens around the second week of August.

- **MCINTOSH** First discovered in Ontario, Canada, this deep red to crimson, medium-large apple is aromatic, crisp, juicy, sweet, and tangy-tart with tender, white flesh. Very good for fresh use, sauces, and baking, McIntosh apples store well. The trees are winter-hardy and productive, although susceptible to apple scab, and the fruit tends to drop prematurely. Spur-type strains such as Macspur, Spur McIntosh, or Marshall McIntosh are similar and suitable. Fruit ripens in mid-September.
- **ORIOLE** Probably the earliest dessert apple; quite large and round with yellow-orange skin and red striping. Flesh is juicy, fine-grained, and tender with low acidity and a sprightly flavor. Trees are rounded, medium-sized, and productive. Fruit ripens in late July to early August.
- **PAULARED** Another early McIntosh-type apple that is high-quality, and medium-sized with bright red skin and tart, juicy, crisp white flesh. Not for storage. Trees are winter-hardy, but very susceptible to fire blight. Fruit ripens in late August to early September.
- **PIXIE CRUNCH** Small, deep-red fruit with crunchy yellow flesh that is rich and very sweet with tart overtones. Trees are moderately vigorous, resistant to apple scab, but susceptible to fire blight and cedar apple rust. Fruit ripens in late September to early October.
- **REGENT** Medium-sized, bright-red over yellow fruit, the skin is tough, but the flesh is crisp and juicy with a mild sweet flavor. The fruit is excellent for fresh use and cooking. Trees are moderately winter-hardy. Fruit ripens in early October.



- **SNOWSWEET** Consistent, medium-sized apple with a bronze-red blush. The firm, crisp, pure white flesh has a sweet-tart balance and is slow to oxidize (turn brown). Trees are moderately vigorous, produce annually, and have some resistance to apple scab and fire blight. Fruit ripens in early to mid-October.
- **SPARTAN** Highly colored, medium-sized apple that is firm and crisp with a solid, dark red blush. The flesh is sweet-tart, white, and juicy. Quality is very good for fresh use and cooking. Trees are medium-sized and winter-hardy. Fruit ripens in late September to early October.
- **ZESTAR!** A crisp, large fruit with striped, red skin, Zestar! is a juicy, early season apple with white flesh and a pleasant acid-sugar balance. Fruit can be stored up to seven weeks. The trees are susceptible to scab, moderately resistant to fire blight, cold-hardy, and vigorous in early years; the shape is upright to spreading. Fruit ripens in late August.

ANTIQUE APPLES

Many older cultivars produce excellent, unique-flavored fruit and may be available from specialized nurseries and garden stores, including those listed at the end of this guide. These antique apples were originally found from a chance seedling or a limb-sport. Hundreds of varieties of antique apples are available, so this is just a list of a few which are well-suited to being grown in Wisconsin; many other antique apples will be available and your local extension agent or nursery can help you choose which will be best in your location or for your purposes.

- **ARKANSAS BLACK** Deep red color that turns almost black in storage. Aromatic and flavorful, Arkansas Black has a crisp texture, sweet/tart flavor, and creamy to pale yellow flesh. Introduced in Arkansas in the 1800s, trees are winter-hardy to USDA hardiness zone 4. For best flavor, store fruit at least a month before eating; fruit can be stored up to eight months in refrigeration. Fruit ripens in October.

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- **BLACK OXFORD** Dark purple, almost black skinned fruit with aromatic, sweet-tart flavor and white flesh. Originating in Oxford County, Maine, in the late 1700s, the trees tolerate cold winters. The small to medium-sized apples keep well three or more months in storage. Fruit ripens in November.

- **COURT PENDU PLAT** Light green with red-orange overtones, this winter-hardy cultivar originated in Europe in the 15th-16th century, possibly of Roman origin. Also known as “Wise Apple,” the trees flower late, escaping spring frost damage. This small, flat, rounded dessert apple has cream-colored flesh and a fruity flavor. Its dense texture, balanced sweetness, and acidity make it excellent for cider and sauces. Apples can be stored for three or more months. Fruit ripens in early September.

- **DUCHESS OF OLDENBURG** Medium-sized, red, mottled-striped apple that originated in Russia in the 18th century. This winter-hardy, highly productive cultivar is a great, early-season option for northern growers. Apples are tart, juicy, and good for eating fresh; they have a short shelf-life, and are best used for making pies or sauces. Fruit ripens in late August.

- **EGREMONT RUSSET** Small to medium-sized apple is golden with fine sandpaper-like skin. Like other russeted cultivars, Egremont Russet has lost popularity to the smooth, shiny apples usually showcased in the grocery stores. However, despite its rough appearance, the flesh is white to creamy with a smooth, pear-like texture. The balanced sweet-tart flavor has been described as nutty, smoky, or with anise undertones, which

combined with the smooth texture makes for a one-of-a-kind apple. Originating in England in the 1800s, the trees are winter-hardy and apple scab resistant. Fruit ripens in late September to early October.

- **GRAVENSTEIN** Medium to large, irregularly shaped apple with broad red stripes, it is thought to have originated in Denmark in 1669. Gravenstein is one of the earliest cultivars to ripen, and has a short shelf life of two to three weeks. An aromatic apple with white to creamy-yellow flesh, the flavor is sweet-tart balanced, excellent for eating fresh, making sauces, or cider. It is susceptible to many diseases. Fruit ripens in late July or early August.

- **HOLSTEIN** Large, greenish-yellow fruit with orange blush, some striping and slight russetting. A relative newcomer, Holstein was discovered in Germany in the early 1900s. Fruit is aromatic, balanced, sweet, and sharp. Flesh is white to cream or light yellow, and is excellent for eating, drying, juices, and cider. Shows some apple scab resistance. Fruit ripens in early September.

- **NEWTOWN PIPPIN** Light green with slight reddish blush and variable size, Newtown (or Albermarle) Pippin originated in Newtown, Long Island in the 1700s. Apples are crisp with white to cream-colored flesh and a distinctive, aromatic, sweet-tart flavor. Excellent for eating fresh, cooking, or making cider. Fruit ripens in late October.

- **NORTHFIELD BEAUTY** Medium to large size with red stripes on a light green background. Originating in Vermont in the early 1800s, Northfield Beauty is highly productive and resistant to apple scab. Apples have a tart flavor, are extremely well-suited for pies and sauces, and can be stored for three or more months—better than most early season antique varieties. Fruit ripens in late August.

- **NORTHWESTERN GREENING** Medium to large size, the skin is tough and green turning to yellow when fully mature. The pale-yellow flesh is firm and mildly tart with hints of citrus and pear. Originating in Wisconsin in the late 1800s, this apple is best for pies or sauces, and keeps well in cold storage. Fruit ripens in October.



- **PINK PEARL** Not only a novelty with its bright pink flesh underneath a smooth, red-orange blush skin, Pink Pearl also is a crisp, flavorful, tart, and juicy apple. The apples make rosy-pink applesauce. This cultivar originated in California in the early 1900s, and might not be a great fit for northern orchards. Fruit ripens in mid-September.
- **REINETTE GRIS** Produces medium-sized, sweet, crisp, and dry fruit with a red blush. Originating in France in the 1600s, the trees are very winter-hardy and the fruit stores well. Fruit ripens in late September.
- **SUMMER RAMBO** Medium-sized, greenish-yellow fruit with red blush; good for fresh use or for cooking. This crisp, tart, and juicy apple originated in France in the 1500s. Fruit ripens in early September.
- **WEALTHY** A good eating apple with mellow, sweet flavor, and smooth, red-striped skin. Originating in Minnesota in 1868, it is very winter-hardy, and is a good choice for northern growers. Fruit ripens in mid-September.
- **WINESAP** An old-time favorite, small- to medium-sized, deep red over yellow, it originated in the U.S. in the early 1800s. The fruit is crisp and tart with a high sugar content and wine-like aroma. Trees are high producers and fruit stores well. Fruit ripens in late October.
- **WOLF RIVER** This old-time favorite originated in central Wisconsin in the late 1800s. Large apples are primarily used for baking (supposedly one apple makes one pie!). Flesh is white to cream-pale yellow and aromatic. The apples are good for eating fresh or cooking, and last one to two months in storage. Trees are frost-hardy, and are resistant to apple scab, cedar apple rust, powdery mildew, and fire blight. Fruit ripens in late September.
- **GOLDRUSH** A flavorful, medium-sized, dessert apple with a dense, crisp texture, and tart-sweet flavor when picked. With Golden Delicious in its lineage, GoldRush has a lot of potential for fresh markets. The fruit stores well and does not turn brown, but rather more golden as it ages. As another product of the P-R-I program, it is resistant to apple scab. However, GoldRush ripens late in the season so may not be a good option for northern Wisconsin orchards. Fruit ripens in late September to early October.
- **LIBERTY** This high-quality, red, dessert apple is crisp and juicy with yellowish flesh. Fruit is good for fresh use and cooking. Thin crops early in the season to attain good fruit size. Bred specifically for disease resistance, Liberty is scab free and resistant to fire blight and cedar-apple rust. Fruit ripens in late September to early October.
- **MURRAY** Dark red skin and medium-large sized fruit with fine-textured, soft, and juicy flesh. Good for eating fresh. It is a good early season replacement for McIntosh. Fruit ripens in early September.
- **MACFREE** McIntosh-type with tender flesh and a fine, slightly sweet flavor, the fruit should be stored one month before eating. Macfree stores well in refrigerated conditions (32-45°F) until March. Resistant to apple scab and fire blight. Fruit ripens with McIntosh in mid-September.
- **NOVA EASYGRO** Producing large fruit, blushed red with white flesh and a sweet, sprightly flavor, this is a good-quality fall apple. The fruit is good for cider blends and should keep well. Fruit ripens in late September.

DISEASE-RESISTANT APPLES

Homeowners who do not want to spray their trees might be interested in apple cultivars that are resistant to apple scab, and in some cases, other diseases. However, they still might require spraying to manage insect pests.

- **CRIMSON CRISP** The most recent release of the Purdue-Rutgers-Illinois (P-R-I) breeding program (2004). Fruit has a full red color, crisp texture, and sweet-tart flavor. Trees are resistant to apple scab, but susceptible to cedar-apple rust and fire blight. An attractive apple, Crimson Crisp stores up to four or more months. Fruit ripens in late September to early October.
- **ENTERPRISE** Also from the P-R-I breeding program, it is a large, attractive fruit with an orange-red blush on green, ripening to deep red. Resistant to apple scab, fire blight, and cedar-apple rust. The flavor can be overly acidic at harvest, and the fruit might require storing for several weeks to bring out the full flavor. Apples mature about 160-days post-bloom, and store well. Fruit ripens in late September to early October.

- **NOVAMAC** Early ripening McIntosh-type. Fruit are primarily red striped. Tree is vigorous and resistant to cedar-apple rust, fire blight, and apple scab. Fruit ripens in late September.
- **REDFREE** An early season, attractive, medium-sized, red apple with a smooth, waxy skin that is russet-free. The flesh is crisp and pleasantly sweet, and the fruit stores well in refrigeration up to 40 days. Another P-R-I introduction, the trees are medium-sized and upright. They are resistant to apple scab and cedar-apple rust, moderately resistant to fire blight and powdery mildew, and highly cold-tolerant, making this variety a great option for northern growers. Fruit ripens in late August.
- **SANSA** An excellent-quality, medium, conical-shaped, red apple with yellow streaking. Sweet and juicy with balanced acidity and flavor, this early cultivar has very good tolerance to apple scab and cedar apple rust. Fruit ripens in mid- to late August.
- **WILLIAM'S PRIDE** Fruit has a complex mix of sweet, tart, and spicy flavors. It is resistant to apple scab, cedar-apple blight, and fire blight, but shows a tendency toward water core, a disorder in which fruit become water-soaked and soft. It has a long window of maturity, requiring multiple pickings. Fruit ripens in late September to early October.

CRABAPPLES

Crabapples are frequently planted as ornamentals in home landscapes. Many cultivars offer attractive spring flowers, pollen for culinary apples, and fruit for fresh use, canning, or jelly making in the fall. Some cultivars retain fruit through the winter for birds to eat. The cultivar you choose will depend on your intended use of the fruit or tree.

- **CENTENNIAL** Fruit are usually 2 inches long with striped, red skin. The flesh is yellow, crisp, and juicy; and the flavor is mildly acidic and considered good for fresh use and sauce. Naturally semi-dwarf trees are moderately resistant to fire blight. Fruit ripens in mid-September.
- **CHESTNUT** This attractive, reddish bronze fruit that is about the size of a small apple, has fine-textured, yellowish flesh that has a pleasing, mildly tart, nut-like flavor. Fruit are excellent for dessert and make superb cider. The tree is vigorous and winter-hardy. Fruit ripens in mid- to late September.
- **DOLGO** Tart for fresh use, the bright red, oval fruit, 1–1.25 inch in diameter, makes a high-quality orange-red jelly. The large-statured trees are extremely winter-hardy, apple scab-resistant, and good pollinizers for many apple cultivars. Fruit ripens in late August.
- **WHITNEY** Large, dessert crabapple with yellow base and red blush-striping is juicy and sweet. The flesh is yellowish with just a hint of tartness and great for jelly, canning, and pickling. The spreading, precocious, and very productive trees have good apple scab and fire blight tolerance. Fruit ripens in late August to early September.

PEARS

Plant at least two cultivars to provide for cross-pollination and adequate fruit set. Harvest the fruit while mature green (fruit is slightly immature but will detach when “tilted” to a horizontal position) and allow fruit to ripen in storage. Due to this unique characteristic, we have included the timing when harvest can begin for each variety. Most pear cultivars are susceptible to fire blight. Dwarf pears using quince as a rootstock are not winter-hardy in Wisconsin. Recommended rootstocks for pears are the Old Home x Farmingdale series, which typically combine better precocity, anchorage, and resistance to fire blight and pear decline than seedling pear rootstocks. These include: OH x F 97, produces a standard-sized tree; OH x F 87, produces trees slightly smaller than standard and imparts high productivity; and 333 (OH x F 333), produces trees about 50–70% of full size. Pear trees need adequate growing space in full sun to produce maximum yield (review *Growing Pears in Wisconsin* (A2072), so allow 200–350 square feet per tree. Pears bloom very early and therefore, cropping is sporadic from year to year.

- **BARTLETT** First discovered in England in the 1800s, this is the standard commercial pear in North America. It is moderately winter-hardy, but adapted to widely varying soil and climatic conditions. Very susceptible to fire blight. The fruit are medium to large size with melting flesh. Good for fresh use and canning. Red-skinned strains, such as Red Sensation, are also available but are not suitable pollinizers of Bartlett. Harvest beginning as early as September.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For specific fruit crops, more information on cultural and pest control requirements is available in the following Cooperative Extension publications available through your UW-Extension county office or online at learningstore.uwex.edu.

SMALL FRUITS

Currants, Gooseberries, Elderberries
Growing Currants, Gooseberries and Elderberries in Wisconsin (A1960)

GRAPES

Growing Grapes in Wisconsin (A1656)
Grape Pest Management for Home Gardeners (A2129)

RASPBERRIES

Growing Raspberries in Wisconsin (A1610)
Raspberry Pest Management for Home Gardeners (A2128)

STRAWBERRIES

Growing Strawberries in Wisconsin (A1597)
Strawberry Pest Management for Home Gardeners (A2127)

APPLES

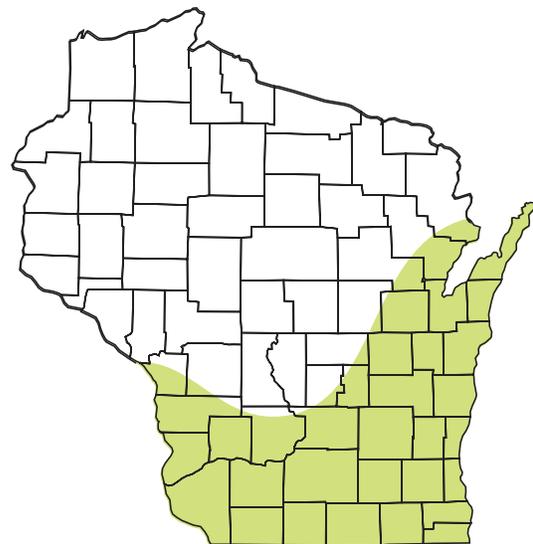
Growing Apples in Wisconsin (A3565)
Apple Cultivars for Wisconsin (A2105)
Apple Pest Management for Home Gardeners (A2179)
Apricots, Cherries, Peaches, Plums
Growing Apricots, Cherries, Peaches, and Plums in Wisconsin (A3639)
Apricot, Cherry, Peach, and Plum Pest Management for Home Gardeners (A2130)

PEARS

Growing Pears in Wisconsin (A2072)

MISCELLANEOUS

Rootstocks for Fruit Trees (A3561)



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