



## Ripening sequences, early picking and other oddities....

Posted by [Alan Surprenant](#)

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[Alan Surprenant](#)

[Ripening sequences, early picking and other oddities....](#)

October 13, 2022 12:43PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 22

We were all done picking apples last week. Wait, it was only October 5th. I'm guessing that the dry spell we had this summer here in western Massachusetts was responsible for early ripening. 10 to 14 days earlier across the board for mid season and winter varieties of apples and pears and Asian pears. Peaches and plums all ripening in summer were ripe at the "right" time. Haven't seen this in the 35 years lifetime of this orchard.

The other oddity this season was with a few varieties of apples the ripening order changed. The Wealthy completely dropped because it was ripe out of order and I missed that while picking other varieties. Golden Delicious and Stark ripened before Liberty. Baldwins, Spys and Black Oxfords ripened in the usual order but were once again 2 weeks early. What are the trees telling me? When you grow 45 varieties commercially you "know" the ripening order. Now I know that I don't know.

Wondering if anyone else had similar experiences as me ?

[Brook Farm Orchard](#)

Zone 5 in Massachusetts

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[Shane Patrick](#)

[Re: Ripening sequences, early picking and other oddities....](#)

October 15, 2022 12:44PM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 22

Hi gang,

We're really just getting started at this, nearing the end of the second season in a mature semi-standard orchard. with 60 varieties. Our rainfall was 17 inches below historical average from April 1st to September 1st. Summer varieties and stones did fine. Several types dropped 60-70% of their load the first week of August. Most guttingly from an economic standpoint was the Macouns. 18 trees with good fruit set yielded 5 bushels. I took it as a good sign that the trees collectively made the decision to throw in the towel on '22 to save resources for next year.

Comparing other orchards and when they're picking what, notes on last year's harvest times, picking damaged apples to cut open for a look at the seeds and taste all used in this, the sophomore season. It did seem weird on some of them but we chalked it up to probably making poor decisions last year. In a data set, ours isn't terribly valuable but anecdotal data is still data.

Some better data that points to how stressed the trees were is that last year I pressed 12 bushels to get 30 gallons of cider. This year I'm pressing 3 batches or 18 bushels a week and averaging 35 gallons.

Shane Patrick

Pleasant Pond Orchard

Richmond, Maine 5b

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[Brittany Kordick](#)

[Re: Ripening sequences, early picking and other oddities....](#)

October 25, 2022 04:16PM

Registered: 4 years ago

Posts: 211

I am tempted to concur on off-the-wall ripening this year, but ultimately, I still don't think we've been harvesting long enough to have the best bead on when we should be harvesting many of our varieties. Earlier in the year, it seemed like everything was trending earlier and we were harvesting summer varieties a week or so earlier than usual. Then by the end of the season it seemed like some of our latest varieties were just not ripening at their usual time (Blacktwig is the big one that stuck out to me, not nearly ripe when it historically has been). But there are still so many varieties that we have yet to pinpoint an average ripening time on (we either miss them because we're caught up with other varieties and they all drop, or they're Northern varieties that ripen way early in the Southeast and we have to watch/sample them very closely to determine when ripeness peaks since the visual cues may be very different from how they look when ripe up North).

Historically, we actually picked much of our orchard prematurely on purpose, hoping to save the fruit from loss to the fungal rots we perennially struggle with. Now that we're achieving some success in fruit rot control, and this year playing around with Japanese apple bags that apparently act to normalize ripening in some of our varieties that we were picking much earlier, it's sort of like going back to square one, as far as what is actually normal for us.

All that said, a month ago I visited a winery an hour southwest of us to pick up some equipment, and I ended up talking extensively to the winemaker -- they were in the midst of harvest, and he mentioned that they were having a lot of trouble with the grapes ripening properly this season. They were actually having to take measures post-pressing to account for the underripeness (I think they added green wood to the mash, if I'm remembering correctly). So for what it's worth . . .

[Kordick Family Farm](#)

Westfield, NC

Zone 7a

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[The Michaels](#)

[Re: Ripening sequences, early picking and other oddities....](#)

October 25, 2022 04:31PM

**Admin**

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 11

We certainly have had timing jumbled here in northern VT but generally this has been across the board early ripening. Two weeks premature has been the average. Early varieties were more well behaved but later varieties not so much. This meant the narrowing of the ripening period, clearly not welcomed. This was the case with other species as well (berries and grapes). Something else though...storage issues. Since the temps have remained higher than normal, especially this fall, any outside storage has been problematic. This is taxing cooler space. Additionally the pre-cooling path (leaving them out during the eve prior to cooler storage) has been upended. In turn this raises electricity costs, at a time rates are increasing. This all, as hinted by Alan, changes the effectiveness of our farmer experience. Like the rest of what is happening globally due to climate change- the landscape, weather, pests and nuances are making our collective wisdom in a region less effective. I am sure we will all rise to the challenge, but alas one more thing to worry about.

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