



Small scale apple washer

Posted by [Peter Fisher](#)

[Forum List](#) [Message List](#) [New Topic](#)

[Peter Fisher](#)

[Small scale apple washer](#)

December 17, 2015 03:07AM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 82

We have a very small orchard (about 145 trees) but it is getting to the point where we need a way to wash Surround off the apples; the kitchen sink isn't going to cut it. The only washers I have been able to find are for a much larger orchard and cost way more than we could justify. Does anyone know of a small washer that is available, or has anyone built one? It wouldn't have to move the apples along a long conveyor; just letting them sit on moving rollers under brushes till they are clean would be enough of a help.

Turkey Creek Orchard

Solon, Iowa (zone 5A)

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Chris Vlitas](#)

[Re: Small scale apple washer](#)

June 23, 2021 11:20PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 47

Edited for brevity

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 09/30/2022 05:33PM by Chris Vlitas.

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[James Smith](#)

[Re: Small scale apple washer](#)

June 24, 2021 08:53AM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 57

I pick door number three, but in full disclosure I have yet to market any fruit.

I was able to tour one of Bluebird's packing operations in Wenatchee, WA and took several pictures. The bin is lifted and placed into a pool of water, then the apples float downstream in sanitiser to dryers. They are then moved onto rollers where watchful eyes look for and discard blemished fruit. Then they fall into individual cups and pass through a device that grades them by size and colour. A computer decides which packing station each fruit will go to and on exiting it gets a sticker stuck to it. The cups release the fruit above the chosen packing station where it is given one final check and packed.

So how does the small, direct grower compete with that? Education. Educate customers on what the fruit in the supermarket goes through to get to their table, from being binned in the orchard, to the assembly line at the packers, to the trucking and unloading at the store. Then sell fruit that is unwashed and ungraded, from the tree to the box to the table. For a higher price fruit that has been hand washed and graded. Customers who are educated on what the industry does to its fruit will appreciate the 'natural' or hand processed fruit the small grower has to offer. That, and the holistic practice.

Washington Okanogan Valley

Zone 6b

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Peter Fisher](#)

[Re: Small scale apple washer](#)

July 11, 2021 08:29PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 82

I ended up building a small apple washer. I figured that the only components that were critical were the washing brushes, so I purchased four from Tew Manufacturing. The rest consists of a plastic sink, off the shelf hardware and plumbing fittings, and a used furnace blower motor I found at an estate sale for \$10. The key is finding a motor that runs slow enough, which a blower motor does (this one has 3 speeds), but they are too expensive new to justify the purchase.

This one holds about 15 to 18 apples at a time, and I just let them keep rotating on the brushes till they are clean. I had to install baffles to keep them from all rolling to one side. Way better than the kitchen sink, but not really suitable for anything but a very small orchard like ours.

If anyone is inclined to try to build their own, I could suggest some improvements and things to avoid, as well as sources for a couple of hard to find hardware items. Start with a sink from ReStore.

Here is a link to a couple of photos.

[[link.shutterfly.com](#)]

[[link.shutterfly.com](#)]

Turkey Creek Orchard
Solon, Iowa (zone 5A)

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 07/12/2021 08:57PM by Peter Fisher.

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Prairie Sundance](#)

[Re: Small scale apple washer](#)

July 13, 2021 07:32PM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 47

Looks good, Peter. I am curious to know more, but we are quite a ways from needing one ourselves, tho I imagine we'll fall into the diy washer category for our small scale orchard. Do you use it on any of your other fruit?

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Craig Bickle](#)

[Re: Small scale apple washer](#)

July 13, 2021 09:47PM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 82

Impressive innovation! But this is one of those times I'm glad I'm focusing on cider rather than selling fruit retail. If I understand right, kaolin clay settles out during fermentation, leaving no residue.

I still need to come up with a better washing system myself. So far I've just put the apples in a mason's tub and hosed them off. A quick rinse is all I require, but the pain comes in fishing them out of the tub. What I need are mesh inserts that fit in buckets so when I pull out the baskets full of wet apples, the water stays behind in the bucket. Anyone using such a system for smallish scale pressing?

Craig Bickle

Hap Woods

Zone 6a

East-Central Ohio

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Peter Fisher](#)

[Re: Small scale apple washer](#)

July 14, 2021 12:57AM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 82

I don't use it on our peaches and Asian pears because I only use Surround a couple of times, right after petal fall, for PC, and the clay residue is gone by harvest. The peaches we grow are considered not firm enough for commercial use (i.e. too juicy) so I don't think they could withstand washing. I wouldn't wash apples either if it weren't for the clay residue after repeated sprays.

Turkey Creek Orchard

Solon, Iowa (zone 5A)

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 07/14/2021 12:58AM by Peter Fisher.

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Newer Topic](#) [Older Topic](#)

[Print View](#) [RSS](#)

Sorry, only registered users may post in this forum.

[Click here to login](#)

This [forum](#) is powered by [Phorum](#).