



## Source for older apple varieties on standard rootstocks

Posted by [James Austin](#)

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[James Austin](#)

[Source for older apple varieties on standard rootstocks](#)

January 15, 2015 01:38AM

Registered: 8 years ago

Posts: 11

Hello, My first post here and I thank you for the opportunity to join in. We have been getting our apple trees from St. Lawrence Nurseries for the last 15 years. We still had a bunch of cultivars we wanted to add to our orchards, but their catalog for this year states they are retiring and if the nursery continues in other hands it will be several years before trees are available. I prefer the standard rootstocks they offer as my work is for the long term stability of the farm (family owned for 155 years) and my childrens' future. I can't swing getting all the trees we want this year, probably can only manage another 30. Is there another nursery that has standard rootstock with grafts of the older varieties and is located in a cold enough climate to provide me with hardy trees for our zone 4 so we could get some this year and more next? My internet searching isn't showing any yet. Thank you for your time.

Spliced Wire Farm & Apiaries

Zone 4b NE Corner of McKean County, PA

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[Todd Parlo](#)

[Re: Source for older apple varieties on standard rootstocks](#)

January 15, 2015 06:43PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 301

James, we sell them. Waldenheightsnursery.com

We also have a list of smaller trees (3' or so) that we will post soon, or can send out, as a lot of others have sold out.

We are certified organic and currently only graft on cold hardy standard seedling stock, and rotate grafts from our orchard of 500 varieties in zone 3.

Very few nurseries sell standard trees anymore simply due to market share issues. Universities have coached for years to go to high density dwarf systems (which makes sense for many). This means less folks are interested in them, which in turn means it is not worth it for the larger nurseries. We, and others like Fedco and St. Lawrence I think, believe maximum production and spray ease is only one aspect of having a tree out there. A tree living 150 years is something too. The trend is changing and you will see more of us soon I am sure.

Also, I always add this comment for those going for the heirlooms: Determine why you have selected this category. I suggest them to folks who like the stories, the diversity, and other cultural aspects of growing one. They often are fairly easy to grow, and have something to offer or they wouldn't be around 100 years (the technical definition of heirloom for many). There is nothing else, however coalescing them into a category. They can be easy or hard to grow, may or may not be suited to your zone and conditions, and may or may not be that good.

[Walden Heights Nursery & Orchard](#)

Zone 3 in Vermont

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[James Austin](#)

[Re: Source for older apple varieties on standard rootstocks](#)

January 15, 2015 09:28PM

Registered: 8 years ago

Posts: 11

I am looking over your offerings. Thank you for the help. I grew up a couple miles from where I am now, we had 2 nice, tended, orchards of old varieties/old trees. Where we are now, had, when I was a boy and occasionally visited, the whole back yard in old varieties which were old trees then(early 70s) , but only one remains (there were over 20). It is a Northern Spy which has always been a favorite of mine. There are remnants around the farm of other older trees which I've been pruning and tending to keep them going, another Northern Spy and a Yellow Transparent as well as a few old trees I don't know the names of. There are dozens of seedling trees of bearing age which we use for cider and cooking, but they are unnamed (we go on taste testing missions around the farm every Autumn, always fun to find a newly bearing seedling tree that is good flavored). I am planting standard trees as I don't want to go through the labor and expense of planting again before my time is done. Our initial plantings are bearing and some of the more recent additions soon should be. I like the older varieties as those are what I'm used to and I feel they should be kept going. I am aiming at an extensive (heirloom varieties) cider orchard as we keep bees and make cyser and the better the cider blend, the better the cyser. My children are young (18 and under) and make cider with glee and sell some to neighbors and have shown a desire to turn this into an income source. Again, as ours is a

multigenerational plan, I feel standard and heirloom are the way to go. That being said, if I encounter more modern varieties that are full of flavor, and not just a pretty, uniform package, I will gladly plant them as well.

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[Tim Bates](#)

[Re: Source for older apple varieties on standard rootstocks](#)

March 01, 2015 07:48PM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 58

Thanks you guys for keeping with standard rootstocks. In my old orchard now mostly in their 80's (and few 104 years old left), I convinced my nursery men to go to standard...eventually they balked as they got less take and less vigor...and eventually that translated to my replants. Since I'm also in it for the long term slower growth was OK. My nursery guys and I (begrudgingly) went back 111. Those guys are now no longer in the nursery business....so I am starting to grow my own. You can order rootstock from Willamette Nurseries in Oregon or from Fedco out by you guys...I'm sure Todd knows all this. This could be a way for James to move his program along. Grafting is pretty easy to learn and rootstock is quite cheap--sometimes less than a buck. Just get some last years wood from those favorites around you and keep the variety alive. Great your doing Cyser.

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[Todd Parlo](#)

[Re: Source for older apple varieties on standard rootstocks](#)

March 01, 2015 09:11PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 301

I am not sure why there was less take and less vigor (if I understand the comments correctly) with standard stock. One of the many reasons I graft and sell on standard seedling is that it has better take rate, and better (more vigorous) growth. Some, like baccata, have compatibility issues, but in general the seedlings are idiotproof. Size reduction stock is routinely wimpy rooted, which means slower nutrient and water accumulation and slower growth (by comparison). It is the more vigorous growth that incidentally delays fruiting a bit longer than dwarfing stock (but not usually in the more northerly climes).

I know the trees we sell may be around well over a hundred years, and that's worth a lot to me. I made a calculation once that a hundred year old tree wound up offering 28,000 pounds in that 100 years. And planted once. A dwarfing stock might have to be replanted 5 or more times in that period and give about 4200 pounds (an m9 or b9 for instance). Commercially, that works since the public is so flaky with their tastes..Fuji going over to Honeycrisp, then to Snowsweet, Crimson Crisp, or maybe next another cute name like "Barbie's Fun House". But, for the steadfast homesteader, a handful of character-filled and proud TREES in the back yard for generations is a damn good answer.

As for rootstock, scionwood, and seed (material we sell we grow ourselves)... we sell them. Fedco sells both stock and scions and are good people. Willamette is one of a group of large industrial farm model stock growers, which is why they are cheap. (I did have to put that last bit in, it is a holistic orchard forum after all).

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Zone 3 in Vermont

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