



Specific Challenges of Kingston Black

Posted by [Cameron Denning](#)

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[Cameron Denning](#)

[Specific Challenges of Kingston Black](#)

March 31, 2015 09:27AM

Registered: 8 years ago

Posts: 5

Kingston Blacks have a reputation for bearing one of the best cider apples, and also being one of the hardest trees to keep healthy and productive. It would seem that no matter how good the fruit is, if a variety is too susceptible to pathogens, it will be replaced by a similar more disease resistant variety. So the question is...1. Who is having success growing Kingston Blacks, and what are your secrets? 2. What is the next best variety comparable to Kingston Black that is available on the market.

Our Kingston Blacks seem to suffer from Black Rot.

[4bark%20peel%20swollen%20disintegrating%20tissue_zpsmfvcz7ts.jpg](#)

I am waiting on a few lab samples to give me a definitive i.d. of the disease. I am brewing Nettle/fungal based compost teas for the first time this year to see if this will help.

[www.finnriver.com]

Zone 8 Chimaquum Washington. Peat soil high in nitrogen. M9 rootstock and trellised at 6 foot spacings. Varieties are all for hard cider.

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 04/01/2015 08:36AM by Cameron Denning.

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[Michael Phillips](#)

[Re: Specific Challenges of Kingston Black](#)

April 01, 2015 07:56PM

Moderator

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 621

Kingston Black here merely has to contend with deer, and it's been a bad winter! My one tree is about six years old, on Antonovka rootstock, not yet fruiting ... but I can pitch in that we're not seeing anything like this. Here's some disease speculation to get others thinking:

Patchy bark peeling appears to be along the edges of a canker. Not necessarily fire blight but in the Pacific Northwest you have *Pseudomonas syringae* bacteria doing things we don't see in the East. This [paper from South Africa](#) mentions "apple blister bark" as one manifestation.

No "fiddle strings" are apparent which would indicate fungal anthracnose.

Black rot sporulates on dead wood left to break down in the air. Limb cankers are possible. The usual first symptom is Frog Eye Leaf Spot, being purple lesions on the leaves appearing by summer. This manifestation is interesting, in that the fungal pathogen enters the leaves through stomate cells. That's a relevant clue: good spray coverage on the underside of the leaf is critical.

Kingston Black may require holistic sprays at more specified intervals at a particular point in the season ... but it's competitive colonization and those fatty acids that will address the pathogen(s) of choice here.

[Lost Nation Orchard](#)

Zone 4b in New Hampshire

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[Claude Jolicoeur](#)

[Re: Specific Challenges of Kingston Black](#)

April 02, 2015 01:15AM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 226

Cameron Denning Wrote:

> 2. What is the next best
> variety comparable to Kingston Black that is
> available on the market.

I think you are going the wrong route there - you seem to be putting KB on a pedestal as « the best cider apple » and if you can't grow it

then find the next best...

Most cider apples are there to do a job... Some bring bitterness, others bring astringency, and others' main job will be to permit cidemaker to work on acidity balance (i.e. sweets and sharps). Hence the « best » one is the one you need for the job you have to do!

KB's main attribute is that it can make a decent cider without need for blending - on most years. This because the acidity is usually well balanced, and it has some tannins, but not too much (again on most years, as this is quite variable from year to year). If you need an apple that has those attributes, then another good one is Stoke Red, or the French Guillevic.

For my part, I prefer to blend different varieties that have each their specialty to obtain the blend I want, than to take what one variety such as KB can give me. Naturally, you could also start with KB and adjust the blend with other more specialized varieties to increase or lower such properties as acidity, bitterness or astringency.

Claude

[Jolicoeur Orchard](#)

Zone 4 in Quebec

Author, [The New Cider Maker's Handbook](#)

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[Nick Segner](#)

[Re: Specific Challenges of Kingston Black](#)

April 02, 2015 06:53AM

Cameron-

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 49

I'm an Oly Pen local and a big fan of your ciders. Great stuff, especially that Belgian yeast one you just did. We just bought 10 acres with one acre of apples in Sequim area and we have approx 20 KBs. We have black rot type problems on KB (and throughout our 260 varieties in a neglected orchard) and I'd be really interested to know, once you hear back from WSU-Extension, what exactly that fungus is that you're having problems with.

I don't have much to offer from experience, but I'm looking at the text "Directory of Apple Cultivars" by Martin Crawford and it lists KB as susceptible (but not very susceptible) to Canker (as well as scab of course).

Nick Segner

Wildcat Valley Farm

Zone 8b

Olympic Peninsula Rainshadow

Port Angeles, Washington

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