



Virginia Hewe's crabapple

Posted by [Craig Bickle](#)

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[Craig Bickle](#)

[Virginia Hewe's crabapple](#)

April 27, 2021 03:47PM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 82

I started an orchard with apples (logically) about 5 years ago and only recently got around to planting a crabapple. I know.. "the second best time to plant a tree..."

But I finally did get a Virginia Hewe's established in a favorable spot this spring. Any thoughts on how this fruit will contribute to cider?

And while I'm asking, I think I talked my partner into letting me plant another crab next year, not only for the eventual fruit quality but also to help pollinate my experimental plots. In these early mini-orchards I didn't pay much attention to making sure whether the trees planted nearby to their neighbors would do well at pollinating one another. (Another one of those things I realized only later why all the books make such a fuss about.) So a prolific pollinator would be an asset.

Craig

Hap Woods

Zone 6a

East-Central Ohio

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[Craig Bickle](#)

[Re: Virginia Hewe's crabapple](#)

June 08, 2021 09:22PM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 82

Update: I'm getting an Evereste! drinking smiley

Next, I need to pick a pear appropriate for future perrys winking smiley

But I also need to devote some time to reading old posts before jumping in with more newbie questions. Maybe this has already been covered elsewhere..

Later!

Craig Bickle

Hap Woods

Zone 6a

East-Central Ohio

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[Craig Bickle](#)

[Re: Virginia Hewe's crabapple](#)

September 20, 2021 07:03PM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 82

Update: we ordered a Wickson! > grinning smiley<

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[Jon O'Donnell](#)

[Re: Virginia Hewe's crabapple](#)

November 08, 2021 05:16PM

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 8

Hudson River valley zone 5B.

I love my Hewes trees. I have three of them that just finished their fifth season. The trees are among the most vigorous in the orchard. Naturally form very wide crotch angles and a spreading vs tall tree. First trees to bear fruit (3 yrs on mm111). Lots of golf ball sized fruit. Sweet, slightly tart, mildly bitter. Seems like a perfectly balanced apple. Some watercoring. I havent gotten enough for a full press but I anticipate that it will be a very good contributor.

Very early ripening, and I will bet you could ferment it on its own or with other early bittersweets and blend in later ripening must.

I grafted a bunch more that I will be planting in the spring.

Wickson - got my first crop this year (5th leaf). Three trees. Every apple rotted by late sept / early October. The ones I tasted prior to rotting had no acidity and were bitter, which is curious given that they are described as a sharp.

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[Craig Bickle](#)

[Re: Virginia Hewe's crabapple](#)

November 08, 2021 05:31PM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 82

Thanks for the report, Jon. It will be a few years yet before I have either Hewes or Wickson crabs to taste in my Ohio orchard. But looking forward to the experience!

Craig Bickle

Hap Woods

Zone 6a

East-Central Ohio

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[Karen Brindle](#)

[Re: Virginia Hewe's crabapple](#)

February 27, 2022 08:47AM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 103

Hey Craig, Wickson and Hewes both great choices. We also have Everest and what a pain to pick! The apples don't come off without also taking off next year's buds. The one year I harvested them, it was with scissors and a tarp underneath. It's almost March and our Everest still has spent apples hanging (those not eaten yet by the birds). However, for pollination, Everest has a long bloom time and spectacular profusion of flowers each and every year.

Our experience with Wickson is that it takes longer to come into good production than Hewes. Ours are going into their 10th year and still lighter crops but slowly increasing each year. But even in the first few fruiting years they had the unique sweet/sharp almost candy taste. Hewes is a bit of an over-achiever for us, early and with flavor like Jon described.

[Vista Ridge Orchard](#)

Zone 8a in Washington

235 Cider and heritage apple trees, 72 varieties,

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[Craig Bickle](#)

[Re: Virginia Hewe's crabapple](#)

March 01, 2022 05:55PM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 82

Thank you, Karen. Between your and Jon's reports, this is exactly the kind of field reporting I was hoping for. I only have three crabs at the moment, Hewes, Wickson, and Dolgo. But I need to start deciding what to order for 2023, so I think I'll include a few more of the first two varieties. (I learned subsequent to planting that Dolgo doesn't do well as cider.)

Anyway, thanks again! As my own trees come into bearing, I'll try to keep this thread updated.

Yours,

Craig Bickle

Hap Woods

Zone 6a

East-Central Ohio

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[Todd Parlo](#)

[Re: Virginia Hewe's crabapple](#)

March 27, 2022 04:54PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 301

Hewes I would put on my short list of must-haves in the cider orchard. For us in northern VT it has seen 30-some below without damage, cropped well, and is pretty easy to manage. I will add that it should be processed without too much delay, as it likes to crack and sort of peel itself if it sits around too long. From what I have seen it also likes to color more in northern climates than in warmer orchards. It has a nice fruitiness that adds complexity to mixes. We have one close to the house, which I use as my trail nibble, which is to say it has a softer tannic aspect.

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[Brittany Kordick](#)

[Re: Virginia Hewe's crabapple](#)

March 27, 2022 10:39PM

Registered: 4 years ago

Posts: 211

I heartily second Todd's endorsement of Hewes as a must-have for a cider orchard. Some of our best single varieties have been made with Hewes squeeze-ins. It grows well for us in NC, Craig, so at least closer to you than New England, climate-wise. Definitely agree with Todd's storage assessment: Hewes just don't keep for us, and we try to press them asap post-picking (this is in sharp contrast to what you read in traditional descriptions of the variety, which may be based on historical anecdotal evidence). They do not tend to blush as much as in other climates when fully mature. One thing to keep in mind when planting is its growth habit. Todd made another post elsewhere in the forum today about how so many of us could improve our orchards with what we know about tree spacing. Hewes is the #1 example in that dept. for us. They grow low and wide, sprawling beautifully, for us . . . and are a disaster, spacing-wise. Instead of cutting down the middle row of our three-row block, which would be a great idea, we are training them hard to grow into each other down the aisles and pruning drastically to keep them out of our drive aisles. They're some of our most attractive trees overall and very prolific bloomers (we make

apple blossom jelly exclusively from Hewes blooms, as they can literally be stripped off branches; they're are also extremely aromatic).

One negative assessment that could be relevant depending on size of operation: Diane Flynt of Foggy Ridge Cider in VA has always said how much her pickers complained about picking Hewes (more work to pick all the little apples, less pay if not paid by the hour). But that could be said of most crab or very small apples in a commercial operation, most likely. But bear in mind that, for you, too, if you're the labor, you get less volume for the picking labor involved. Personally, I love Hewes to pick, almost like picking plums or cherries . . . but I'm not paying myself piecemeal.

[Kordick Family Farm](#)

Westfield, NC

Zone 7a

Edited 2 time(s). Last edit at 03/27/2022 10:50PM by Brittany Kordick.

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[Craig Bickle](#)

[Re: Virginia Hewe's crabapple](#)

March 28, 2022 04:03PM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 82

The helpful testimonials keep coming! The only bit that gives me pause is Brittany's note about spacing. I was just thinking this week how my Hewes and Dolgo look awfully close together. I'd have to get out a tape measure but I'm guessing 11 feet. I'm sure at the time of ordering and then planting I followed the recommended spacing per the rootstock I chose, but now I can easily imagine them touching branches, especially if the Hewes likes to grow low and wide. Well, too late now!

Guess I'll see how they develop and maybe be mindful as I prune over the years. But why did that first strong scaffold branch just have to grow directly toward its adjacent partner?!!

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[Brittany Kordick](#)

[Re: Virginia Hewe's crabapple](#)

April 21, 2022 02:32AM

Registered: 4 years ago

Posts: 211

One more thought to add about Hewes came to mind as grafting season cranks up for us: Hewes will bloom on 1 year-old wood. Great from a pruning and production standpoint, but it can be really annoying from a grafting standpoint as sometimes you have to work a bit to get a nice growing tip going. We spend a lot of time carefully removing flowers whilst trying to preserve any leaves we can.

[Kordick Family Farm](#)

Westfield, NC

Zone 7a

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[Craig Bickle](#)

[Re: Virginia Hewe's crabapple](#)

April 25, 2022 10:34PM

Registered: 2 years ago

Posts: 82

We haven't yet entered the world of grafting. Done a bit of it here on the farm to get a sense of the possibilities. But still in the process of establishing the orchard and finding it most convenient as well as safe to get trees from Cummins.

Burr knots on the .M26 rootstock we grafted onto. The Genevas we ordered OTOH are doing well.

I'm deep into decision-making for next year's trees, atm, so have rootstock on the brain. Thanks for the heads up though, Brittany!

Craig Bickle

Hap Woods

Zone 6a

East-Central Ohio

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[Brittany Kordick](#)

[Re: Virginia Hewe's crabapple](#)

February 04, 2023 05:46PM

Registered: 4 years ago

Posts: 211

I feel compelled to add one more unlikely attribute to the list concerning Hewe's Crab: dried apples. This past year we were invited to exhibit at a cider festival that wanted to expose more consumers to the nature of true cider apples. We knew our Hewes Crabs would never keep for the fall fest, but since we definitely wanted to include them in the display, we decided to try halving the crabapples and drying them. They turned out to be surprisingly good (and darn cute) and I'm sitting here happily munching on leftovers all these months later. Obviously, these dried apples would not be what most people are used to in a dried apple, what with the small seeds and cores, and plethora of skin, and wouldn't recommend them for cooking or adding to granola or anything, but if you like a lot of texture, fiber, and flavor in your dried apples and enjoying snacking on handfuls, just yum. The drying process really brings out the sweetness in these little apples and they don't resemble the fresh version, flavorwise, at all.

[Kordick Family Farm](#)

Westfield, NC

Zone 7a

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 02/04/2023 05:48PM by Brittany Kordick.

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