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fruit holding fast

Posted by [Michael Phillips](#)

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[Michael Phillips](#)

[fruit holding fast](#)

October 24, 2019 03:03PM

Moderator

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 621

Never have I seen apples hold so well to the trees. Size is amazing this year despite no thinning many upper branches. Fruit varieties that I started picking four weeks ago (usual timing in past years) remains firm. Sure, apples like Gravenstein and Macs eventually drop if not tended but even this point was reached two weeks or so later. Yesterday I finished picking Honeygold, Wolf River, Nova Spy, and Jonafree, all in excellent (mouth watering) shape. I haven't even tackled the keepers like Blue Pearmain and Northern Spy as yet. I'm wondering what others are seeing in this respect in the 2019 season, especially taking into account bioregional differences. I tweaked my nutrient and microbe applications this season but then again had a long window of sprayer down time in midsummer. Is it the year? Is it the photosynthetic bacteria from Quantum? Is it fermented plant extracts? Is it someone in the night applying gorilla glue?

Hopefully this generates actual discussion.

Thanks. Michael

[Lost Nation Orchard](#)

Zone 4b in New Hampshire

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

[Chris Vlit](#)

[Re: fruit holding fast](#)

October 24, 2019 04:56PM

Edited for brevity

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 47

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 09/30/2022 05:38PM by Chris Vlit.

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[Michael Phillips](#)

[Re: fruit holding fast](#)

October 26, 2019 02:35PM

Moderator

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 621

This is not the first time I saw a spring with delayed bloom on that order. Thirty years' worth of crop records at this site confirms a late bloom is followed by a delay in ripening of early varieties and then things catch up. The same can be said of this year. Something far more wondrous is going on in terms of the holding power of fruit and thus more size and color. Nor have I ever seen such integrity of the apple flesh. More is afoot here than Honeycrisp staying on the tree six weeks beyond it's first harvest date. I'm looking for confirmation of this elsewhere otherwise I am going to come out in favor of those enhanced levels of photosynthetic bacteria in the holistic sprays as a contributing factor. *I stand amazed.*

[Lost Nation Orchard](#)

Zone 4b in New Hampshire

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 10/31/2019 02:33PM by Michael Phillips.

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[David Maxwell](#)

[Re: fruit holding fast](#)

October 26, 2019 10:06PM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 197

On the South Shore of Nova Scotia we had a prolonged cold wet spring, (and a killing frost in June), followed by a prolonged drought - nary a single drop of rain from mid-July until mid-September. I did not irrigate, (nor did most of the commercial growers in the Annapolis Valley), and nobody got fruit anywhere near normal size. (Even Honeycrisp being offered in the local markets are no bigger than 2 1/4"). The drought stress also weakened the trees' defenses, so, despite holistic sprays etc., there was heavy insect and disease pressure. Result, scant crop of stunted and severely diseased fruit. The only tree which seems to have been happy in this is my one Quince of Portugal, which is absolutely laden, and on which the quinces are still rapidly expanding. (Some are probably reaching maturity, judging by their

having lost their fuzz; others are still actively growing.) And none of them fell in the latest "post-tropical storm" (with 120 km winds), nor in last week's "weather bomb", (whose winds were only 80 to 90 km/hr.)

[Broomholm Orchard](#)

Zone 5b in Nova Scotia

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[Peter Drevniok](#)

[Re: fruit holding fast](#)

October 27, 2019 06:44PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 31

My small orchard (100 trees more or less) in Wakefield, Quebec is just starting to produce. Perhaps

I got 12 - 15 bushels of apples in total (eg Liberty, Sweet 16, Golden Russet, Kidds Orange, Honeygold to name a few).

I did 4 holistic sprays and sprayed Kaolin clay 3 times. I also do a Cueva spray before bud break and that was it. Nary an insect but I see scab is making an appearance. Like David our summer here was extremely dry so apple size was smallish but a little rain late in the season sure helped to size the apples up. Wakefield is up in the Gatineau Hills so I assume harvest dates would be a little later - but all my apples were picked much later than any harvest date I researched - except perhaps the russets which I harvested Oct 20. Very few apples fell even the Macintoshes stayed on the tree. An acquaintance who has a commercial orchard about 75 miles south near Dundas, Ontario (and certainly a zone and a half warmer) harvested his Liberties Sept 19 - I harvested mine on 12 October and they seem wonderful still. I know that this is perhaps not a great confirmation of later harvest dates for 2019 since I don't have a lot of previous harvests to compare with.

However, when I read Michael's post I thought, yeah, that's what I experienced also - everything was harvested later in 2019 from what I can tell.

Side note: I have 2 Roxbury Russets and even though they haven't had time to mellow they are perhaps the most amazing apple I have ever tasted.

Maxwell Mountain Orchards

Wakefield, Quebec zone 4

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[Claude Jolicoeur](#)

[Re: fruit holding fast](#)

October 28, 2019 05:58AM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 226

Like all others, Michael, I don't think it is due to any intervention from your part. Here also in my totally unsprayed and minimally managed orchard, I am seeing apples that stay in the tree much longer than usual, with delayed ripening. This was a constant from the summer apples through the mid-season and late varieties.

In my case however, this caused late varieties to remain slightly undersize - with cold autumn weather, it seems they didn't have the time they needed to develop full size. Also acidity is a bit over average, possibly indicating insufficient maturation, while sugar levels are average. The crop is also a bit slim (about 40% less than a good year), but after 4 consecutive good years, this had to happen.

It might be worth to mention also that bloom here was the latest I recorded since 1994, with full bloom around June 15. That is a good 10 days later than average.

Claude

[Jolicoeur Orchard](#)

Zone 4 in Quebec

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

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[Todd Parlo](#)

[Re: fruit holding fast](#)

October 29, 2019 09:35PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 301

If I were forced to guess, I would say it is the temperatures this fall. We all know that excessive heat can cause apple drop, but cold temps can also influence the abscission layer, and (scary) low temps can cause some damage and get ethylene production pumping.

I am strongly seeing this phenomenon as well- almost across the board- and I have a lot of varieties here. The winner is a late summer apple that is normally fully dropped by the 3rd week of Sept, now almost fully loaded still, with 25% clinging tight and rotting on the tree. That's 5 weeks late and counting. Honeycrisp which is normally patched here, are almost all blood red. Now, oddly, a few are hanging longer than usual, but are actually not colored or ripened as much as they were on this date last year. All orchard areas showing a general reluctance to drop fruit, regardless of treatment. Same goes for our bordering wild fruit. Leaves, however are shedding or coloring on schedule.

Another thought. Although I am full aware of the varied mechanisms in fruit ripening, it does stand to reason with such a late beginning to the growing season, that the trees would not be "done yet" with their business. This would add to photoperiod and weather conditions a period length of growing temperatures.

Something to watch for in the next year or two are signs of winter damage. Late or continuous ripening in cold areas can keep the tree from properly going into dormancy (one of the reasons cold area cultivars are often early croppers).

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[Michael Phillips](#)

[Re: fruit holding fast](#)

October 31, 2019 02:52AM

Moderator

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 621

Valid comments, Todd, thanks. Leaf abscission is on pace, with no seemingly negative impact in green vigor coming to an end on schedule despite the extended ripening period of the fruit. Still, heaven forbid that foliar-applied nutrients delivered to a robust arboreal food web would have any benefit on crop production or quality. The nutritional side of a strong stem connection is relevant. Not that I'm going to be disillusioned by those taking a "minimalist intervention" (do nothing) approach or conventional organics based on mineral fungicides to the nth degree. The wild trees in this area are not looking anything like what I see in my trees. Wild fruit does not seem to be hanging, other than the usual individual trees with that trait, nor was feral size particularly noteworthy in those trees I gather cider apples.

Meanwhile, thank you Eastern Canada for a crop consensus as to smaller fruit in 2019. David's comment that drought stress seemed to undo holistic underpinnings needs to be looked into from the perspective of upping efforts accordingly, both as regards mycorrhizal networking through diverse plant communities and specific foliar. Somewhere between here and Claude's orchard north of Quebec City lies a "rain divide" as we have had reasonable moisture all season long.

And the rest of you? Southern New England? New York? Upper Midwest? This forum would be far more dynamic if more of us contributed perspective. I've heard from Pennsylvania growers that high fungal pressure made things rather dismal in the Mid-Atlantic but on the other hand I've also been given some impressive mountain fruit from Georgia recently. These are the mysteries that make orcharding so much fun!

[Lost Nation Orchard](#)

Zone 4b in New Hampshire

Edited 2 time(s). Last edit at 11/01/2019 03:07PM by Michael Phillips.

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[Karen Brindle](#)

[Re: fruit holding fast](#)

December 04, 2019 05:59AM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 103

Here in the PNW it was a bit of a different story. We had our largest crop so far in our young orchard, It was an "on" year for many of our biennials, but the quality was not what I expected or hoped for. Apples ripened much later but also many dropped before ripening fully, and some hung on the trees and never finished ripening. Flavor (tannin and aromatics) was reduced. Color never finished on some. Sugar levels were down in our region, a concern to the cider maker who buys our apples and who consoled me that we were not alone. Most local growers they buy from had the same issue, with many different management techniques. Fortunately they can add sugar to the cider if needed to get the precise ABV they need. I don't keep journals on the weather because what can be done about it? Overall, summer was a bit cooler and August was wetter than normal. November was the 4th driest since records started. Scab was actually less this year. Some local orchards lost blossoms due to a late frost but our hillside trees were not affected.

Well, our trees still put on a lot of growth, I see lots of fruit spurs, next year will be better!

[Vista Ridge Orchard](#)

Zone 8a in Washington

235 Cider and heritage apple trees, 72 varieties,

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