



# Healthy Fruit

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Prepared by the University of Massachusetts Fruit Team

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### ***MFGA Reminder***

ACTIVE members of the Massachusetts Fruit Growers' Association (MFGA) are reminded they are eligible for advertising cost-sharing for the 2002 harvest and marketing season. All you need to do is run a print advertisement for Massachusetts-grown fruit, and include the 'Mass Grown and Fresher' Logo. MFGA will reimburse the publisher of your ad up to 50% of the cost, and for a maximum of \$500 per grower. For more information, and an advertising cost-share application, visit the MFGA web site, [www.massfruitgrowers.org](http://www.massfruitgrowers.org), or call Wes Autio, 413-545-2963.

### ***Apple Maturity on a Roll***

If you have not already noticed, apple maturity is moving right along, particularly in the warmer growing areas of MA. Recent starch-index tests of McIntosh and Honeycrisp at the UMass Orchard in Belchertown had average readings in the 5-6 range. Some drop is already occurring, particularly in (mite) stressed trees. Results of fruit testing are available on the UMass Fruit Advisor website: <http://www.umass.edu/fruitadvisor>.

We will update this as often as new fruit are tested, and include other locations from throughout the State. If you have any questions, please let us know.

I suspect most of you east of the CT River are going at it full steam now, particularly on McIntosh. Gala harvest should be complete in the warmer areas -- watch your Gala closely for signs of cracking and splitting. Also monitor Honeycrisp maturity -- the starch-index test is good, and change in red skin color to a deeper hue is also a good sign. Do not let Honeycrisp go too late, as quality and storability will suffer (see next article). Recent warm weather has likely accelerated maturity, so a return to cooler weather predicted for later this week will be good. Fruit size is generally good, and fruit color (at least in Belchertown) are generally good.

### ***Honeycrisp Harvest Recommendations***

Many growers have planted Honeycrisp in response to market demand and the (mostly) desirable and unique characteristics of the apple. Although not all the bugs have been worked out, considerable effort by researchers in New York, Michigan, and here at home in Massachusetts over the past few years has gone into developing preliminary harvest and storage

regimes for Honeycrisp. At this point our best recommendations for harvesting and storing Honeycrisp are as follows:

- < Harvest during the early- to mid-range of it's picking season. The first or second week in September are appropriate for the start of Honeycrisp harvest in warmer areas. Start to pick Honeycrisp when Starch-Index (SI) readings are in the 5-6 range. Deepening red skin color will be your key to picking, however, fruit may still be 'green' when ready to harvest. Honeycrisp DOES respond well to the SI test and it is a reliable indicator of maturity. Skin color and taste are also appropriate indexes of maturity. Stressed trees (mites, nutrient deficiencies) will drop readily.
- < There are some indications Honeycrisp is sensitive to cold injury -- including soft scald -- during storage, so storage temperatures of 36-38 F. are recommended. If harvested earlier enough, Honeycrisp are not likely to soft scald in storage. Honeycrisp stored at or near 32 F. are more likely to soft scald than those stored at higher temperatures, particularly if harvested late. Honeycrisp does not lose (much) firmness in storage, thus the benefits of colder temperatures in storage are somewhat nonexistent.
- < Monitor fruit for off-flavor development at harvest and during storage. Again, when compared to fruit stored at lower temperatures, a storage temperature of 38 F. seems to inhibit formation of acetaldehyde, ethylacetate, and ethanol which contribute to off-flavor development in Honeycrisp. (NY data.) Whenever off-flavors are detected in Honeycrisp fruit, it is best to avoid the fresh-market so as not to ruin Honeycrisp's reputation. This is best avoided by harvesting Honeycrisp at the proper maturity.

### ***If You Missed the Peach Showcase...***

Interested stone fruit growers who missed the UMass Peach Showcase held at the UMass Cold Spring Orchard on August 29 still have a chance to look at the fruit -- visit the UMass Fruit Advisor website (<http://www.umass.edu/fruitadvisor>) for a link to pictures of the 28 peach and nectarine varieties that were on display, plus 10 early apple varieties. Most fruit were from the UMass Cold Spring Orchard, however, some peaches were supplied by Win Cowgill of Rutgers (NJ) Cooperative Extension. If you have any questions or comments, contact Jon Clements, 413-323-4208, [clements@umext.umass.edu](mailto:clements@umext.umass.edu).