

Apple Update – 2013

Our apple trees have been planted for seven years now and had pretty good production this year. We thin the apples so that the fruit size is larger, ripens faster and so that the trees are not unduly stressed. The season was quite dry and late this year so this was a good choice.

Because of all the snow lingering in the orchard, we could not get in to prune the apples until May 6th. I asked Tom Kalb, NDSU Extension horticulture specialist, to help me this this spring because our trees are standard-sized and last year he recommended that I lower their height. This required some major decisions and I wanted him to give me some reassurance. It worked great! The trees and I are both happier, I think. To the right, you can see that I was able to get my ladder right into this Hazen tree – and it's only a 3- or 4-step ladder, too.



All of the crops were about 3 weeks behind their normal schedules and this was especially critical for the apples. Now a variety such as 'Honeycrisp', which normally ripens the third week of September, has its finale in October. A later variety, like 'Haralred', really becomes a problem.

Thankfully we had another long fall and many crops that were in doubt in late August were able to finish up. 'Hazen' was picked September 9th but would have been better if picked on the 4th or 5th. 'Zestar' came off September 12th. 'Honeycrisp' was picked October 1-4 and was a bit tart, but we didn't want to risk a predicted freeze in the coming days. 'Sweet Sixteen' apples were still small that first week and were left on the trees until October 19, just before the actual hard freeze. 'Haralred' was also picked then.

I didn't record the weights of 'Hazen', but got at least 100 pounds from the four trees. Our six 'Honeycrisp' yielded 400 pounds of really delightful fruit. These were our only significant apple harvests.



A nice crop of 'Hazen'.



Thinned 'Honeycrisp' on a tree with really great fruit set.