



“Fruit Facts” – Tuesday, July 8th, 2025

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To Do Today

Honeycrisp sample collection for Peel sap is this week - attention WNY growers/packers/consultants: This week is the time for collection of ‘Honeycrisp’ fruit samples for peel sap analysis. Growers should have started the collection of fruit samples yesterday and should continue today July 8, tomorrow Wednesday the 9, and Thursday the 10. Last day to pick up frozen peels will be by the end of this week.

This year the price is **\$25 dollars per sample** for peel sap analysis. Sample registration is here <https://lof.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=2095> . If interested to submit a sample, you should collect a 30-fruit sample from each of your Honeycrisp blocks, weigh the sample to get the average fruit weight in grams, peel the fruits from stem end to calyx end, freeze the peel sample, and then contact your CCE LOF fruit extension specialist for submitting the sample and make the payment.

How to Prepare and Submit Peel Samples for Peel SAP Analysis: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYCqEOFwANI>

Please email or call Craig (cjk37@cornell.edu; 585-735-5448) or Mario (mrm67@cornell.edu; 315-719-1318) if you are planning to submit a sample this year!

We are at the beginning of the time window (early July) for leaf sampling collection for Honeycrisp in WNY (don't collect/submit leaves with severe leaf chlorosis): In the last five years we have recommended that growers collect Honeycrisp leaf samples for nutrient analysis about one month earlier than traditionally suggested dates for other apple varieties in early to mid-August. This season the optimal timing for leaf sampling collection is starting **this week** in WNY. There are two reasons for this early leaf sampling:

- Honeycrisp trees typically stop their shoot growth by the third week in June, earlier than many other apple varieties.
- Development of zonal leaf chlorosis affects leaf nutrient concentrations, particularly leaf nitrogen status.

Hand thinning reminders: We recommend that you count total fruit per tree on 5-10 representative trees in each block and reduce fruit number (via hand thinning, ideally with a platform) to the most profitable crop load (your targeted fruit number per tree). Hand thinning will be necessary in blocks where final fruit set (desired number of fruit/tree at harvest) is still relatively high in the tops of the trees.

- Early hand thinning will help somewhat to mitigate biennial bearing in Honeycrisp, where floral initiation is earlier than the rest of the cultivars. Please review the recommendations for return bloom sent in previous Fruit Facts.
- Early hand thinning will also improve fruit size in small-fruited varieties like **NY-1 and Gala**.
- Take advantage of your platforms to get hand thinning done quickly and more efficiently this 2025 season.

Avoid the common mistake of excessive crop loads in years 2 to 4 which leads to too little tree growth (varieties differ in their biennial bearing tendency and this must be incorporated into the crop loads allowed on young trees).

Cultivar ¹	Growth Habit	Biennial bearing tendency	Crop load per tree after hand thinning
Honeycrisp ²	Weak growing cultivar	Biennial	2 nd year: 12-18 apples 3 rd year: 20-35 apples 4 th year: 40-70 apples
Fortune, Fuji, Golden Delicious", Jonagold, Mutsu, Spy	Strong growing cultivar	Biennial	2 nd year: 16-20 apples 3 rd year: 25-40 apples 4 th year: 65-80 apples
Gala, Empire, Mac, Rome, Idared	Medium growing cultivar	Annual (more reliable bearer)	2 nd year: 20-25 apples 3 rd year: 30-50 apples 4 th year: 80-100 apples

¹ For **NY1 trees** which had moderate or poor growth in the first year or were planted on a weak rootstock, these trees should be de-fruited because fruits will outcompete with overall tree and shoot leader growth for carbohydrates and water.

² Please remember that hand thinning in Honeycrisp should start not later than @ 38-42mm. It is critical and should be done for good return bloom next year.

Keep irrigating if you have water available for your blocks ! We have started the phase of cell expansion and water shortages at this point can be critical and hard to recover later on the season. Irrigate if you have trickle installed.

With this hot weather watch irrigation needs also for new plantings: New plantings can stop growth if irrigation is not applied (if available at your farm). Please remember that irrigation is an essential tool for maximum tree growth on new plantings.

Frequency of irrigation depends on soil type: With sandy soils, water should be added either daily or every 2 days. With silt or clay soils, the daily amount of water needed can be added up for several days.

Remember, if irrigation fails, fails nutrition.

Now is the time to prune one year old shoots in the orchard and nursery:

It is applicable for almost any grafted orchard situation (side-grafted, top-worked, or beaver-grafted), green or 'ellepot' trees planted in previous summers, plant-in-place projects (budded or bench-grafted trees established in previous seasons), multileader trees, and for the 'grow-through' apple tree production method, you can now prune the one-year old shoots and leave them with a stub of 4-fingers length (for all at the top and some in the middle of the tree). Leave a longer fruiting unit especially at the bottom of the tree if they have 2-3 flower buds. Use your own hand or 'una cuarta' in the Spanish language to guide the length of the pruning cut. The fruitful fruiting units after this type of pruning should be 12-16 inches length (according to the in-row spacing or the space between leaders/root if it's a high density grafted orchard). Favor/produce a more tubular type of tree via pruning now.

Growers should consider the ethrel spray program for return bloom for strongly biennial cultivars like Honeycrisp (the same program can be started for Fuji as its flower initiation/formation starts after Honeycrisp). There is a risk of Ethephon and high temperatures. We recommend not to spray if temperatures will be above 85F. Growers should avoid/skip any heat with temps close or above 85°F for the return bloom sprays with Ethrel this week.

Sudangrass and buckwheat have different properties, so the management goal and field condition will determine which is the right one for you:

- Sudangrass is often chosen for **improving soil organic matter**. It produces a strong root system and lots of biomass. The deep root system helps reduce subsurface hardness. Sudangrass is also a good choice for reducing root-knot nematode pressure.

- Sudangrass is suitable for short, 8-10 week plantings. Seeding rates are 30 lbs/acre for biomass and nematode control and 50 lbs/acre for weed control.
- Seeding rates are June through mid-August (for sudangrass)
- Seeding rates are July through mid-August (for sorghum-sudangrass)
- This grass grows very fast, so keep an eye on it. Mow the first time when it reaches 3 feet and the second time while the flail mower can still chop it well.
- If sudangrass gets too big to control, it will be killed by frost and make a nice winter mulch. However, the biofumigant effect will be lost.
- Sudangrass needs a final flail mowing and immediate incorporation to suppress nematodes.
- Please notice that we have seen good results with the additional strip-seeding of radish tillage (by around August 10-15) in the future in-row spacing of an orchard to be planted the following spring.
- **Buckwheat** is best known for **weed suppression and mellowing the soil**. It covers the ground earlier than sudangrass, especially if seeded in early June, and outcompetes weeds that may establish in sudangrass. Sudangrass requires a higher seeding rate for effective weed suppression.
 - Both cover crops should be mowed after about 40 days. This is the end of the season for buckwheat, but the beginning of major root growth for sudangrass.
 - To avoid volunteer buckwheat seed, kill the crop before there are filled green seeds on the plant. This takes about 40 days from a July planting or 50 days from a June planting.
 - Buckwheat seed is available from some local farm seed retailers and is relatively cheap. The variety does not matter, and many suppliers don't identify any variety. A bag is enough to seed an acre.

In previous Fruit Facts, we have mentioned that there is an opportunity to mix the sorghum sudangrass with cowpea or sunnhemp to get some nitrogen into the soil and maximize the sudangrass biomass this 2025 season.

- If you have any doubt about this new recommendation and/or how to get the best use of cover crops during pre-site preparations this summer, don't hesitate to contact Dr. Deborah Aller (Cornell soil health specialist for tree fruit perennial systems) to da352@cornell.edu and/or call 631-902-1582 (cell phone).

2025 Mechanical Summer Hedging - Timing by Varietal Fruit Size: We encourage growers to target their mechanical summer pruning time based on the fruit-size characteristics of the apple cultivar. For large-fruited varieties such as 'Honeycrisp' – where we intentionally want to control or reduce fruit size at harvest and especially during a rainy summer – we recommend an "early" timing for mechanical summer pruning and a "late" timing for small-fruited varieties such as 'Gala' to avoid a negative effect on fruit size before harvest. Medium-sized varieties should be mechanically summer pruned after 'Honeycrisp' and before 'Gala' to have the same controlling effect on fruit size.

Under New York weather conditions, a mechanical summer pruning program should be started for 'Honeycrisp' as early as June 20–25, and for 'Gala' approximately 4–5 weeks later. In some cases, a 'Gala' block could even be hedged 7–10 days before harvest to facilitate the use of harvest platforms.

Disease and Pest Outlook:

- **Extreme heat last week and this week – beware potential fireblight infections.**
 - The recommendation to address summer shoot blight is to apply prohexadione calcium (i.e. Kudos) at 12 oz/100 gal, then allow the trees to take it up for at least a day, and then to apply a copper (i.e. CS2005, the Badge Products, MasterCop, or Cueva). Then prune out strikes on a dry day (or remove the entire tree in many cases – it may be tempting to try to save the tree but only do so if you will be able to really remove all the bacteria).
 - Double Nickel and Cueva can be a very good combination.
- **Spotted wing drosophila has now been caught on both sides of the city, and all farms with susceptible fruit should be managing for SWD.**

- For insecticide options for SWD, view the [SWD Insecticide Quick Guide for Berries](#) (updated in 2025) and the [2024 Cherry Fruit Fly Quick Guide](#) (updated in 2024).
- For updates on SWD and other pests, sign up now for the [NY Berry Pest Monitoring Blog](#).

- **Woolly apple aphid** continues to build up in many blocks, although the rains seem to have set them back some. Scout now and manage WAA problem blocks before they have time to build up large colonies that can protect the center aphids from any contact with a spray. WAA can be controlled by Beleaf, Sefina, or Sivanto Prime at this timing. Those will also manage **rosy apple and green/spirea aphids, which have been present in high numbers.**
- A single **apple maggot fly** was trapped in Niagara county last week, on a baited red sticky sphere. If you plan to monitor for apple maggot, hang traps now. **The threshold for a baited trap is a cumulative 5 apple maggot flies per trap.** Apple maggot management options include the diamides: Altacor (5day PHI) and Exirel (3day PHI), neonicotinoid: Assail (7day PHI), organophosphate: Imidan (7day PHI), and the pyrethroids: Baythroid (7day PHI) and Danitol and Mustant Maxx (both 14day PHI).
- **Summer diseases** such as **sooty blotch and flyspeck, black rot, white rot and bitter rot** should be managed now as we move into mid-summer.
 - Products that are effective for SBFS, and black, white, and bitter rots include Flint Extra (14day PHI), Inspire Super (14day PHI), Luna Sensation (14day PHI), Merivon (0day PHI), and Pristine (0day PHI).
 - **In general, fungicide covers for the rots go on every 14 days**, but remember that 1.5" of rainfall would trigger a re-cover (rule of thumb, varies some by product).

Stone Fruit

- **Begin cherry fruit fly management as soon as fruits begin to blush.**
 - For insecticide options for cherry fruit flies (and SWD), view the [2024 Cherry Fruit Fly Quick Guide](#) (updated in 2024).
 - The quarantine zone for European Cherry Fruit Fly continues to expand. **Please see Fruit Notes article which we will be sending out tomorrow for an update on the quarantine regulations for ECFF for 2025!**
- **Peach Diseases (rusty spot, bacterial spot, brown rot):** Captan, Miravis, Inspire Super (2day PHI), and Merivon will control brown rot and peach scab. Be sure to rotate active ingredients to delay resistance. The addition of a copper (i.e. Cueva) will help blocks with a history of bacterial spot.

Every effort has been made to provide correct, complete, and up-to-date pesticide recommendations. Nevertheless, changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly, and human errors are still possible. These recommendations are not a substitute for pesticide labeling. Please read the label before applying any pesticide. Copyright 2025. All rights reserved. No part of this material may be reproduced or redistributed by any means without permission. Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities.

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