



**“Fruit Facts” – Tuesday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025**  
**Mario Miranda Sazo and Janet van Zoeren**

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Your \$75 subscription (if in the Lake Ontario Fruit Program partner counties of Niagara, Monroe, Orleans, Oswego and Wayne) gets you critical information on a weekly basis during apple harvest. Fruit samples are usually collected early in the week from across the region and sampled for internal ethylene concentration, firmness, starch/iodine, and total soluble solids. Results are summarized and recommendations for harvest windows of major apple and pear varieties are either faxed or emailed to subscribers later in the week. Satellite subscribers outside of the five partner CCE associations can receive reports as well, for \$100. Not sure if you’ve subscribed this season? Contact Zayda Moyle [zrm24@cornell.edu](mailto:zrm24@cornell.edu) or 585-798-4265, ext. 122.

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## To Do Today

**Overall Maturity (information prepared by Craig Kahlke and originally sent to growers on Saturday August 23, 2025):**

**Harvest dates:** As detailed in email blasts and the newsletter earlier this month, we are running behind last year in terms of harvest maturity and predicted picking dates. Keep in mind last year was an extremely early season, from start to finish. With the heat of the summer, we are close to degree days of last year, but we are waiting for final sizing and color in many blocks. Due to our dry/drought conditions across WNY, there are a lot of blocks out there with small fruit size. However, I've seen good sizing in Premier Honeycrisp and Ginger Gold in many cases.

If color and size minimums are met, my best estimate is that picking dates are running about a week behind last year. Of course, there is certainly variation. Because of these inherent variations, the average maturity index readings of several grower blocks (as developed by my regional testing program) has often provided a better guide to harvest than a few readings from individual orchards. The data in these harvest maturity reports are meant to be used as a general indicator of apple harvest maturity under natural conditions. We always recommend you test your blocks individually for firmness, brix, SPI, background color change, and varietal flavor and compare against the data from these reports and what others are seeing. In addition, please follow recommended maturity indices for each variety in addition to consulting with your marketer. Make sure there is adequate varietal flavor prior to harvest. Fruit with little to no varietal flavor will kill repeat sales.

Positives from the dry conditions mean that sugars (brix) are up in early-season apples, and varietal flavor will be excellent. Fruit firmness is also excellent. In addition, the forecast for all of this week (August 25-29) is for temperatures in the 70's with 50's at night, which should produce excellent coloring potential. Unfortunately, there is little significant rain in the 7 days forecast. With our heavy spring rains that produced good cell division, the potential for increasing size is there if we get some rain in the coming weeks.

**The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center 10-14 day outlook valid from August 30-September 5 (<https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/814day/>)** is predicting normal temperatures but below normal precipitation. This should point to predictable apple maturation but not much help with sizing. Also keep in mind that trees with lighter crop loads tend to have advanced maturity; those with heavier crop loads should see delayed maturity. Variable crop loads within blocks can also have different maturation, making harvest difficult, especially in a variety that is supposed to be single pick. Severe stress can delay maturity and/or make it unpredictable.

### **Plant Growth Regulators (PGR's)**

**See the article in the last LOF *Fruit Notes*. (The Use of Plant Growth Regulators Near Harvest in 2025), for full recommendations, but see updates below. Didn't get it or can't find it? Email or text Craig.**

**Preharvest Drop**— The steady heat buildup of the season coupled with the dry conditions and tree stress along with my early observations confirm that we are at moderate to high risk for preharvest drop. I've seen drop in Premier Honeycrisp and Zestar! Thus far. McIntosh blocks could see drop as well. Monitor your drop-susceptible blocks closely. Consider a stop-drop material. Preharvest drop risk: Start with blocks that have a history of preharvest drop. Examine fruit already on the ground. Any fruit on the ground that has bitter pit, or major pest damage- or anything that caused the fruit to mature ahead of the rest of fruit should not be considered preharvest drop. Gently tap limbs and look for drop or push-off. PUSH-OFF – fruit is missing stems, has flat spots or limb creases – often occurs from large clusters of large fruit bumping one another, seen this and nearly every year- this is not drop, nor it is ethylene-driven. DROP – fruit is loose on tree, fruit has stems.

**Premier Honeycrisp** – Early spot picking has started, much more later this week (August 25-29).

This new strain of Honeycrisp matures about 3 weeks earlier than the others. Many more growers have planted this strain in recent years, and we've reached a critical mass for testing a good sampling of blocks from across the region. 50% red color or more is the standard. Background color should be breaking from green to a creamy/yellow. The amount of fruit per tree that could be harvested soon may only be 10 -15% (or less!) of the total crop load. Like its parent, Premier is a variable ethylene producer and it doesn't correlate with maturity, therefore it won't be tested for

internal ethylene concentration here. Beware of preharvest drop in this variety. There has been reports on non-PGR-treated fruit. More testing this week.

### A Quick Look at Where We are with Specific Varieties, in General Order of Maturity

- **Wildfire Gala** – This is a very early strain of Gala that is at least 3 weeks earlier than most strains. There are very few blocks out there are to sample. Most inland blocks have had 2 picks already and are finished. The fruit gets full red color. This strain appears to be an even smaller apple than later Gala strains, even with proper crop load adjustment. In addition, it is a true “summer” apple, and does not have much potential storage so it should be packed quickly after harvest. Flavor is impressive, it tastes like a Gala for sure. Exact maturity indices have not been developed yet, but near full red color, with firmness 15-20 pounds, brix 12-14%, and SPI averaging 5-7 are my best guesses at this time. I looked at a block near the lake on 8/20, and it was 2<sup>nd</sup> pick fruit with a firmness of 18.5 lbs, a brix of 12.6%, and an SPI of 5.5 with a range of 1-7. Testing concluding this week.
- **Paulared** – This variety has been replaced by much better ones for the first variety to be picked in our region. I didn’t test any and don’t plan on it for the future. The main maturity indices for this variety are the changing of the background color from green to creamy yellow, apples loosening on the stem, a starch reading near 3.0, and pressures between 15-16 psi. Testing finished here.
- **Bartlett Pears** – Nearly in the range for fresh market. The 2 inland blocks I tested on 8/20 and had average pressures ranging from 18.3-20.2 lbs., with brix at 10.9-11.8%. Movement below 18 pounds indicates that harvest for the fresh market should take place. Processing fruit harvest should follow a few days later, as 16-18 pounds is the target firmness range for this market. Final testing this week.
- **Zestar** – This variety has fallen out of favor in the wholesale market, as the fruit bruise too easily and soften too quickly. However, it is a great farm market apple with excellent flavor. I tested 3 blocks this week. One inland block was ready for spot picking while the other 2 (one inland, one intermediate) still needed several days, as background color was still too green. The blocks I tested ranged from 14.1-15.5 lbs average firmness, 13.1-13.6% average brix, and an average SPI range of 3.9-4.7. 73% of the apples were producing appreciable ethylene. This is a drop-susceptible variety, and I’ve seen some drop in an inland site. Exact maturity indices have not been developed for our area, but fruit for picking generally has a brix of 12-13%, starch in the 3.5-6.5 range, and pressure from 12-14 pounds. A rule of thumb I look at is when the brix goes above the firmness, the apple is at its peak. This is a multiple pick (usually 2) variety. Final testing this week.
- **Premier Honeycrisp** – a very low percentage spot pick has started, but the bulk of first (low volume?) picking will likely be done later this week (August 25-29), when we get proper color change. More testing this week.
- **Ginger Gold** – Harvest may begin later this week for many. More testing this week.
- **Gala (standard strains)** – testing will begin this week.
- **McIntosh (standard strains)** – testing will begin this week.
- **Honeycrisp (standard strains)** – testing will begin the week of 9/1.

### **Pest Management Reminders:**

- **Apple scab** continues to infect many orchards. Keep your fungicide program going if you see scab symptoms. Rotate between single-site products such as Cevya (0day PHI), Merivon (0day PHI), Tesaris (0day PHI), Rhyme (14day PHI); Flint Extra (14day PHI), Luna Sensation (14day PHI), Aprovia (30day PHI), and Sovran (30day PHI).
- **Summer diseases** such as **sooty blotch and flyspeck, black rot, white rot and bitter rot** management continues now through harvest.
  - 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).
- Across the state **brown marmorated stink bug** numbers remain low this year. However, if you have a history of damage in your blocks, effective materials include Brigade (30day PHI), Beseige (21day PHI), and Leverage 360 (7day PHI).
- **Apple maggot fly** numbers are still below threshold in the traps where I am monitoring. Threshold for a non-baited trap is a 2 apple maggot flies per week per trap. A highly recommended AM product is the neonicotinoid Assail (7day PHI). Other AM management options include the diamides (which double up for lep protection): Altacor (5day PHI) and Exirel (3day PHI), the organophosphate Imidan (7day PHI), and the pyrethroids: Baythroid (7day PHI) and Danitol and Mustang Maxx (both 14day PHI).
- We are now finishing up flights for Codling Moth, Oriental Fruit Moth and Oblique Banded Leafroller.

### **Berries and soft skinned fruits:**

- **Keep tight insecticide coverage on all susceptible crops through until the end of harvest.**
  - Reapplication should happen every 7 days for products with an “excellent” efficacy and every 4-5 days for softer chemistries with a “good” or less efficacy.

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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