



When to Pick **APPLES**

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By Brian Finnigan – Bingham County Extension News, Aug. 30, 2001

Here are several points to help you decide when to pick apples, especially if a severe frost is forecast, and how to store apples.

1. Apples freeze at about 27-28°F depending on variety and amount of accumulated sugars--sweeter varieties and riper fruit freeze at a lower temperature.
2. If apples are frozen on the surface, do not pick until they are fully thawed to prevent bruising.
3. Apples may drop more readily after a freeze.
4. Unless the fruit temperature falls to 22-23°F, apples will survive. At about 22°F, fruit cell death and damage occurs causing browning and breakdown soon after thawing.
5. If browning and breakdown do not show up soon after thawing, the apples have survived freezing, but any freezing causes softening and faster deteriorations during storage. Apples that were frozen will not store as long as unfrozen apples.
6. If apples freeze, use them as quickly as possible.
7. Contrary to popular opinion, a frost will not sweeten or mature apples or other fruit. Sugars accumulate with bright warm (not hot) days and cool nights regardless of frost. A light frost will be of little or no consequence except the cool nights facilitate sugars and maturity.
8. Picking fruit at optimum maturity is the goal. Go by taste and color to determine the best time to pick. Immature apples will never develop top quality flavor and are more subject to shriveling, scald, bitter pit and brown core after harvest. Over-mature fruit will deteriorate quickly and are subject to flesh softening, internal breakdown and rots.
9. For maintaining quality after harvest, apples should be cooled quickly. Ideally they should be cooled to 32°F within 24-36 hours after picking. Storage temperatures should be 32°-38°F for most of our varieties. Most late season apples can be stored from 2-4 months at these low temperatures.

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