

## **Recommendation for Fruit Growers in Bear Country**

It's important to keep fruit trees and berries from becoming unnecessary animal attractants. One way to do this is to make sure fruit does not stay on the tree longer than necessary, i.e. fruit tree owners should be ready to harvest fruit as soon as the fruit matures. Though this is true of all fruit in our area, the fruit that is most likely to be a problem is fruit that ripens late in the season such as mid to late maturing apples that are still on the tree in October.

### **A few ways to determine if apples are ready to be harvested:**

**Position on tree:** Fruit on the south side of the tree are usually the first to mature, so try these first.

**Ease of fruit separation:** Ripe apples will separate easily from the tree. Try harvesting one by giving an upward-twist to the apple. Ripe apples will readily detach from the branch, unripe apples will be harder to remove.

**Fruit drop:** Look for apples on the ground. Unless a windstorm or other disturbance has recently occurred, a few apples on the ground usually means the rest of the crop is nearing maturity. Always be sure to pick up any fallen fruit as soon as possible.

**Color:** Skin color change may also be an indicator—a gradual change from mostly green to mostly yellow or red, depending on apple variety. The flesh color of an unripe apple usually has a green-tinge, and will mature to a white (again, depending on variety).

**Seeds or pips:** In a mature apple, seeds or pips will be brown.

**Taste:** One of the easiest, most obvious ways to tell if an apple crop is ripe is to taste one! An unripe apple will be astringent, and very sour—generally unpalatable depending on degree of ripeness, variety, and one's personal preference. Ripe apples are sweeter and are slightly softer than unripe apples.

It should be noted that the above are just general guidelines. Some apples trees yield crops that mature all at once, others may have fruit that mature over a span of a few weeks. Over time, a grower will get a better idea of their trees' characteristics. Keeping good records is important.

**Things to do with unripe apples:** Unfortunately, unlike some other fruit, unripe apples don't ripen well off of the tree. If a pending freeze, or other deadline, makes it necessary to harvest apples before maturity, you may still be able to use these unripe apples in the following ways:

- 1) Unripe apples contain more pectin so they can be use to make a homemade pectin for use in making jams and jellies. The internet has some good recipes and instructions on how to do this.
- 2) Use them in crafts
- 3) Animal fodder
- 4) Possibly as a minor additive in cider-making.

### **Other important ways to not attract bears to your area:**

- Keep your garbage and garbage cans indoors except for on collection day.
- Only put up bird seed feeders during the winter months when bears are hibernating.
- Hummingbird feeders should be inaccessible to bears.
- Don't feed pets outdoors.
- Don't add pungent smelling items to your compost.
- Keep your barbecue grill clean.
- Harvest the root crops in your garden as soon as they are ready. Bears like root vegetables too.

**Or consider installing an electric fence.**