Expansion of the New Jersey Weekly Apple Maturity Review in 2024

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The NJ Apple Maturity Review website was established in 2021 and has continued to grow with the financial support of the New Jersey Horticulture Society. The purpose of the website is to provide New Jersey fruit growers with weekly reports on stages of apple maturity based on variety and location. In 2024 the project was expanded to include 47 cultivars across 8 locations in northern and central New Jersey.

Beginning in late August 2024 apples were consistently collected from varieties expected to reach maturity within 1 to 3 weeks. Sampling occurred weekly; depending on varieties present at each orchard, between one and eight orchards were sampled each week. Eight apples were collected from high, low, shielded and exposed areas of the tree for each variety at each farm., Samples were transported for laboratory analysis and measurement of several characteristics, including: average fruit diameter; average percentage red surface color; average soluble solids (% sugar); average pressure (lbs.) and average starch rating.. Lastly tasting notes were recorded by one calibrated taste tester.

All data was inputted on a report on the Apple Maturity Website URL: https://njapplematurity.rutgers.edu/. At the top of each report the optimal measurements for each apple maturity indices were listed as a reference point. An example of a report is illustrated in Figure 1.

September 20, 2024

BY MEGAN MUEHLBAUER • SEPTEMBER 20, 2024

Location	Variety	Fruit Diameter (in)	Soluble Solids (% Sugar)	Pressure (lbs)	Starch Rating	Percentage of Red in Surface Color	Tasting Notes	Comments	Photo
Optimum:			***12-14% SSC***	***13-15 lbs***	***6-7***				
Blairstown	Early Fuji	2.3"	13.3%	16.10	6.3	75%	Sweet	Ready	
Blairstown	Jonagold	2.7"	13%	16.31	4.5	50%	Crisp, starchy	Not Ready	
Blairstown	Empire	2.5"	10.9%	19.61	4.5	50%	Very sweet, flavorful	Ready	
Blairstown	Spartan	2.4"	11.8%	17.3	6.5	70%	Juicy, tart	Ready	
Hackettstown	Brookfield Gala	2.9"	13.6%	18.74	7	90%	Tart, crisp	Ready	

Figure 1. An example of a portion of one of the weekly reports published on the New Jersey Apple Maturity Website.

Table 1. Statistics on the number of views and visitors obtained from the Jetpack App linked to the NJ apple maturity WordPress website.

Eight posts encompassing samples collected from 8 locations and 47 cultivars			
	September	**October**	**November**
Views	250	647	152
Visitors	152	502	106

Readership for the website was high throughout the 2024 harvest season (Table 1). as expected, the greatest number of views and visitors, 647 and 502 respectively, were during October when the vast majority of apples were coming into maturity.

Growers throughout New Jersey, the MidAtlantic and New England are all encouraged to subscribe to weekly in season E-mails of the reports. https://njapplematurity.rutgers.edu/.

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