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Weather for August

Weather during the month of August was much improved over the dismal conditions during July. The high for the month was 32.1°C with a mean temperature of 20.1°C which was above last year's mean and the 48 year average of 18.7. Rainfall at Kentville was 177.8 mm well above the 48 year average of 90.1 mm. Most of the precipitation was the result of the two tropical storms in late August. Sunshine hours were also up with 245.8 hours recorded which compares to the 48 year average of 214.6. The increased heat, sunshine and precipitation are of benefit to this year's apple crop.

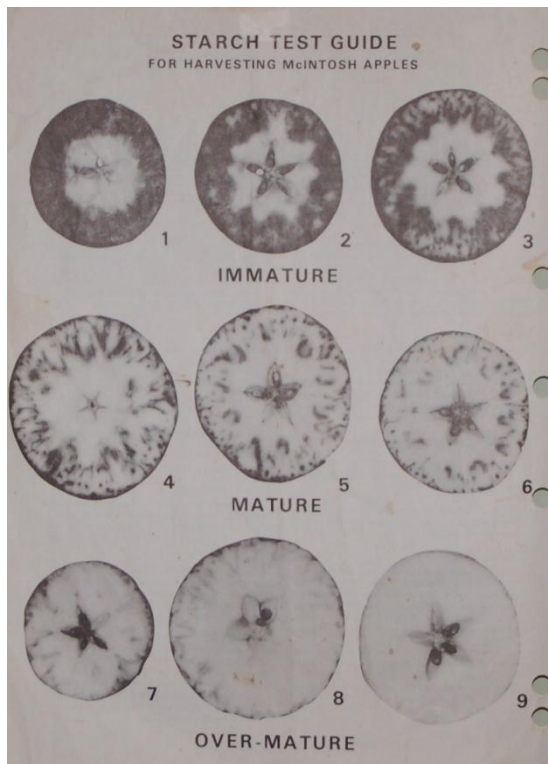
Brooks Spot

Brooks Spot is a minor fungal disease that can occur throughout the northeastern and mid-Atlantic apple growing regions. Over the years I have observed this disease occasional and usually on apples that were not sprayed for apple scab. Cultivars vary in their susceptibility to this disease with 'Jonathan', 'Golden Delicious', 'Stayman Winesap', 'Grimes Golden' and 'Rome Beauty' being rated as more susceptible. It would appear that Honeycrisp may belong to this group as Brooks Spot has been observed on Honeycrisp in several Valley orchards. One of the parents of Honeycrisp is Honeygold which was developed from a cross of Golden Delicious and Haralson. The symptoms as described by the Kearneysville website: http://www.caf.wvu.edu/KEARNEYSVILLE/disease_descriptions/ombrooks.html are as follow: spots first appear as irregular, slightly sunken dark green lesions typically on the calyx end of immature fruit. As these fruit mature, the lesions turn dark red or purple on red areas of the fruit and remain dark green on green or yellow areas. When you first observe the disease you could confuse it with bitter pit however Brooks Spot usually appears earlier in the growing season and shows little browning of the flesh under the spot. Primary infection takes place when ascospores are discharged from overwintering leaves in late spring and early summer. Fruit lesions appear in late July and August. Symptoms of leaf infection do not appear until late summer as small purple lesions. Most of the fungicide applied to control apple scab will control Brooks Spot but here is the catch, the DMI fungicides Nova and Nustar are ineffective against Brooks Spot. The failure to control Brooks Spot this year may be related to the use on DMI fungicides by themselves and not mixed with a broad spectrum fungicide, or the reduced rates of fungicide used to control scab.

Pin Point Scab

Pin point scab infection can take place in the fall during periods of wet weather. The infection can appear prior to harvest or during the first 30-45 days of storage. For the infection to take place there has to be a reduced fungicide level on the fruit and sources of inoculum in your orchard (fruit or leaf lesions) and a sufficient wetting period. If there is a lot of scab in your orchard, infections can take place with a 30-36 hour wetting period. If there is very little scab present it may take up to 48 hours of wetting for the infection to become established. A late August or early September spray application of Maestro/Captan generally should provide sufficient protection against pin point scab.

Fruit Maturity



The starch iodine test is still one of the best tools to growers for determining fruit maturity and when to begin harvesting. With an earlier bloom date this year compared to last year one would expect fruit maturity to be a bit advanced. Cooler evening temperatures are bringing on good red colour development on McIntosh and with the late August rains fruit size generally is not an issue. If you think that your apples can be harvested then why not starch test to verify that they are mature enough for picking. One of the best marketing tools is to consistently provide the consumer with a high quality product and there is nothing worse than biting into an apple with lots of eye appeal to be disappointed by its lack of flavour and/or poor texture.

As apples mature the starch is converted to sugar and starch is stained black by an iodine solution while sugar is not. The amount of starch in the flesh of the apple is an indication of its maturity.

An apple with little or no starch at the time of harvest will be a better eating apple than those that still have a fair amount of starch. The apple with none or very little starch will have a shorter storage period than those with a defined level of starch. In the case of McIntosh the harvesting for long term CA storage begins when the apples have a starch level of 2-2.5 with regular CA beginning around 3.0. Once fruit has reached a starch level above 6 it is considered to be too mature for CA. The fruit however is acceptable for marketing and short term cold storage.

Pear maturity

Bartlett pear pressure was around the 19 lbs mark on September 2nd. Harvest of Bartlett pears can begin once pressure has reached or dropped below the 19 lb mark. If you haven't already harvested Bartletts you should do so ASAP. The approximate harvest date for Flemish Beauty is September 20 at 6.1 kg pressure, Anjou September 27-October 6 at 6.1kg pressure and Bosc October 6 at 6.8 kg pressure.

Calcium Sprays

It is not too late to be applying calcium sprays to reduce bitter pit problems. Applying a calcium spray to the fruit just prior to harvest will be more effective in getting calcium into the fruit than the same spray applied when the fruit is less than 2.5 cm in diameter. The calcium spray has to land on the fruit surface to be absorbed thus the larger the fruit the more spray lands on the apple and more calcium enters the fruit. Orchard visits in late August and early September indicate that fruit size will be large in blocks which are under crop load management. Vegetative growth has also been strong, which is a reflection of adequate rain throughout the growing season. Large fruit size and vigorous tree growth are contributing factors to bitter pit. Some bitter pit has begun to appear on young planting of Honeycrisp where the fruit size is large and crop load is light. The dilute rate for calcium chloride at this point in the growing season 13.5 kg/ha.

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