

Fifer Orchards Apple orchard tour



Apple blossoms arrive in March and April with the spring warmth.



For a flower to develop into an apple, the pollen that is produced by one flower must be transferred to another flower. Cross-pollination occurs when pollen is moved from the flowers on one apple tree to the flowers on another. This most often happens when honey bees come to the apple blossoms to collect nectar and pollen and fly from one tree to another. Though an apple tree may produce some fruit without cross-pollination, it will yield a lot more fruit if cross-pollination occurs. This is why an orchard can't be made up of only one apple variety. At least two different kinds of apple trees are needed for cross pollination. We used many hives of honey bees to pollinate our apples and enjoy the honey they produce in our store.



Apple blossoms on our dwarf apple trees. This method of apple production places the trees very close together at planting and wires are used to help support them. This is very similar to a vineyard style approach to apple growing. The benefits of dwarf apples trees include: reduced labor due to easier harvest and pruning (no ladders needed), high production per acre, and high quality and high color fruit. We grow 27 different varieties of apples at Fifer Orchards and they all have their own unique flavors and characteristics. We have variety chart cards at the registers inside the store if you're interested. We also offer U-Pick apples in September and October.



Apple blossoms are very vulnerable to cold damage. Temperatures below 30 degrees for more than a few hours can kill some of the blossoms. Frost can also damage the fruit crop at this time of year.



After bloom, leaves begin to emerge on the apple trees. If you look closely at this picture you can see the white insect trap that we use for scouting and monitoring detrimental pests. We use pheromone to attract the insects so that we can make educated decisions on which pests are a problem.



As the tree develops, small apples begin to emerge. We sometime need to thin the apples (remove some of the apples) so the apples are evenly spaced on the tree and can grow to a desirable size. If all the fruit was left on the trees, all the apples would be the size of small limes.



In the summer and early fall, apples ripen to maturity and sweeten to perfection. Our apples ripen at different times from June-October. We use trickle irrigation to water the trees properly during the hot summer months. Trickle irrigation is just a plastic tube that runs along the base of the tree trunks. This application places the water right at the root zone where it is needed.



Apples are picked in to cloth bags. The bottom of the bag has a trap door that opens so the apples can be gently transferred in to large wooden bin boxes without bruising.



When the bins are full, they are moved by forklift to our packing house for cleaning, grading and packing.



The bins are submerged in a big tank of water. The apples then float down the line to scrubbers and brushes that clean the fruit before grading them by size and quality.



A computer sorts the fruit by size. Each bushel box can have 70-160 apples per box depending on size.



After packing, the apples are stored in a large cold storage building where they are kept at 34 degrees prior to shipment to grocery stores, restaurants, schools and markets.



You can find all the Fifer Orchards apple varieties in our Country Store in Camden-Wyoming. You can't beat the freshness.



In the winter, all the apple trees must be pruned. This is a very important step to keep our orchards thriving and healthy. The pruning allows the proper amount of light and wind to move through the trees during the following summer.