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Ripe for the picking: Orchards enjoying good apple season

By [Robert M. Cook](#)
Tuesday, September 1, 2009

LEE — "Ripe," "delicious," and "excellent" are just some of the words Seacoast apple growers used Monday to describe the bumper crop that people will experience when apple picking begins this weekend.

Mike Lynch, farm manager at DeMeritt Hill Farm on Route 155 in Lee, said August provided enough sunny, warm and dry days to help the orchard's 20 varieties of apples to fully ripen after the region experienced so much rain in June and July.

Tree fruit benefitted from those conditions much more than vine fruit and vegetables like tomatoes, squash and strawberries, said Lynch, who was worked at the Lee farm for 18 years.

Talbert Edwards, a seasonal worker from Jamaica who has picked apples at DeMeritt Hill Farm for 18 consecutive years, said he, too, was impressed by this year's crop.

He spent much of the day Monday picking Ginger Gold apples, which are in season in late August and early September.

Lynch said the farm is scheduled to be open for apple picking on Saturday and expects to sell plenty of apples, cider doughnuts and fresh baked pies through late October.

"The next eight weeks are pretty hectic," he said.

Row upon row of trees were bursting with red and gold apples throughout the 18-acre farm, which has been in the DeMeritt family since the early 1800s. Lynch said the farm will produce an average of 100 bushels of apples per acre.

Meg Wilson, owner of DeMeritt Hill Farm, said they plan to be open seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and will offer a family fun weekend with hay rides and crafts on Sept. 19 and 20.

DeMeritt Hill Farm is one of several apple orchards in the Seacoast that are reporting a good crop.

Justin Cantin, whose parents, Roger and Melanie Cantin, own Pineview Orchard in Berwick,



John Huff/Staff photographer Talbert Edwards has picked apples at DeMeritt Hill Farm in Lee for 18 seasons and thinks this is one of the best harvests in years.

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Maine, said they will also open for apple picking on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. after their apples benefitted from August's dry weather.

"We are doing very well this year," he said.

Pineview Orchard has nine varieties of apples to choose from and the MacIntosh apples are fully ripened. The orchard, which has been owned by the Cantin family for nine years, also has 600 apple trees.

Doug McKenzie, owner of McKenzie's Farm in Milton, said his apple orchard will also be open for apple picking beginning on Sunday every day from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. through late October. McKenzie's Farm features up to 12 varieties of apples.

Apple growers are hoping their bountiful harvest of apples will draw plenty of families to their apple orchards this fall.

At DeMeritt Hill Farm, Lynch said they typically see many families return every fall to enjoy a full day of apple picking, picnicking and other activities. The farm's cider doughnuts are also a hot commodity at the farm's store.

Lorraine Merrill, commissioner of the N.H. Department of Agriculture in Concord, said Monday nearly all of the state's apple growers are gearing up for what could be one of their best seasons.

"The apple crop is really looking great," Merrill said. "I think the apple growers are pretty optimistic about the kind of apple crop we are going to have."

To view a list of apple orchards in New Hampshire that offer pick your own, visit <http://www.pickyourown.org/NH.htm>. A list of Maine apple orchards that offer pick your own can be viewed at <http://www.maineapples.org/members/list.aspx>



John Huff/Staff photographer Apple season is about to begin at DeMeritt Hill Farm in Lee and this year's harvest is exemplary.

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