

Orchard Outlook



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Honeycrisp Fruit Maturity Update

A handheld device has become a useful tool to growers for determining Honeycrisp fruit maturity and when to begin harvesting. The device is a Delta Absorbance (DA) Meter that uses pulses of light to measure the chlorophyll content of the apple skin, and the value indicates the maturity of the fruit.

Each apple variety has a protocol to follow while using the DA meter. For Honeycrisp in Nova Scotia, a value above 0.59 indicates an immature apple that should not be harvested because it lacks good flavour and colour. Honeycrisp harvest can begin when apples are at optimum maturity, with values from 0.59 to 0.36. Honeycrisp apples picked at optimum maturity can be harvested and stored, and they are less likely to develop storage disorders compared with over-mature apples. Once the fruit have reached values below 0.36 they are considered over-mature, but the fruit is acceptable to harvest and market immediately.

On Thursday, September 14, 2017, the DA readings for 25 Honeycrisp fruit in Rockland averaged around 0.79, indicating immature fruit. The DA readings for 25 Honeycrisp fruit in Canard averaged around 0.69, and on large trees with a light crop the fruit averaged a value of 0.74, which were also immature. Depending on the weather in the coming weeks, these values suggest the apples are 1 to 2 weeks from harvest.

Fruit maturity can vary in regions throughout the valley and may be more advanced in some regions. Rely on DA readings in your region for when to begin harvest. If in doubt of DA values, refer to the traditional starch iodine test.

DA values provided by Dr. John DeLong (AAFC)

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