

TRIAL N ERROR ON MIAPPLE FARM – by Peter Cooke

IDENTIFICATION.

ORCHARD TREE LABELS

We use cattle ear tags to label each tree in our orchard. You can use an Allflex EarTag Pen to write on the flexible plastic ear tag – but we found it was too thick to print a name clearly. The Artline Garden Marker pen has a finer tip and the written label lasts about the same 4 years out in the weather.

We now hand write the ID number and tree name on the top half of the label and engrave the name again on the bottom half using a fine tip engraving tool – so that when the penned label fades you can still read the engraving.

We attach the label to a small name post at the base of each tree. Plastic cable ties (even the UV stabilised variety) only last a season before they snap. We now use looped tie wire.

At Pettys Orchard which has multi grafted trees they have used plastic chain tied around individual branches and attached to cattle tag labels. The problem is when the chain or cable tie holding it breaks, the label will fall to the ground and the relationship of the label to which branch it came from is lost.

At Miapple Farm we have a rule of one apple variety per tree and any growth below the graft is cut away.

Where plastic chain is used to identify individual branches on a multi-grafted tree, the chain and label is joined using tie wire – we learned NOT to use plastic cable ties.

I know a collector who has his orchard beside the sea in Apollo Bay – his tree name tags are engraved stainless steel – rather expensive.

Others make a label cutting up a used aluminium drink can and write the name using a ball point pen on the aluminium foil while resting it on a rubber backing pad.

POTTED TREE LABELS

I tried white plastic paddle labels written with marker pen – they became brittle from the UV and broke apart.

I tried plastic labels printed with the plant name using a laser printer. The labels became brittle after two years in the weather.

I now use coloured Tyvek tractor feed labels sourced from Tytags Australia. I use an Artline Garden Marker pen to write the label and the labels are still serviceable and readable after seven years out in the weather.

Some people use aluminium labels with copper wire ties – I have not tried them – they tend to catch on things when working with the potted trees.

SCION COLLECTION LABELS.

Before cutting scions, I prepare plastic paddle labels in advance showing the tree variety, row and number. The labels are written using an Artline Garden Marker pen. After the writing has dried, the label can be disinfected in a metholated spirit solution without the writing being affected.

The pre prepared labels are sorted into row and number order and then disinfected.

The labels are attached to bundles of scions with new (clean) rubber bands and placed in new clean plastic zip lunchbags for storage in the refrigerator prior to sale or grafting.

Sold scions are attached to new Tyvek tractor feed labels with rubber bands and packaged for delivery.

LABELS & MAINTENANCE

Tree naming labels on cattle ear tags need to be removed and re-written every four years as the writing fades in the sun.

Tie wire if attached to a tree must be loose tied to prevent the wire becoming imbedded in the tree.

Where I have used plastic cable ties in the past, I have had to replace them with tie wire and plastic chain.

A new innovation for tying labels has been where the label hole is big enough, to use aluminium electricians cable clips.

IDENTITY RECORDS

I have developed an identity template for use in identifying each apple variety in my orchard – necessary as I have about 350 different varieties to manage.

The template includes name(s), Row & number, size, shape, colours of – cavity, main base, over flush and stripes. Evidence of russetting, lentical dots and surface bloom. Flesh – colour, texture and flavour. Flowering time, ripening time, fruit bearing (tip or spur). Uses, parentage, synonyms, fertility and other relevant data gathered for each variety.

As each variety bears fruit, I fill out an identity template, photograph the fruit and match the template data against descriptions in books and websites that are available to me.

If I can match the template data with published descriptions – I add the variety to my list of stock varieties available for sale.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Using a digital camera (with flash option turned on) I photograph individual and groups of apples as they ripen and include in the photograph a little piece of whiteboard including the Miapple name and a scale ruler to indicate the size of the apple. The expected variety name is written on the whiteboard with removeable whiteboard marker pen. The digital photograph is allocated a number by the camera and the jpg file is transferred to my computer for later processing.

As the photographed variety is positively identified against books and internet references, the jpg file is renamed with the variety name to indicate it is a Miapple photo and is matched (or not). The date the photo was taken recorded by the camera is also in indicator or the ripening date.

BOOKS & REFERENCES

My main “Bible” is - Apple Register of the United Kingdom by Muriel Smith
Ref. for more modern apples – Directory of Apple Cultivars by Martin Crawford

Another ref: The New Book of Apples by Joan Morgan and Alison Richards

For USA apples – Old Southern Apples by Creighton Lee Calhoun Jr.

Also – Apples a Field Guide – by Michael Clark

Australian Apples – All About Apples by Allen Gilbert.

Victoria Aust Apples – Apples Old and New by Clive Winmill

Cider Apples – A Somerset Pomona by Liz Copas

Aust Cider apples – Rare and Heritage Fruit Cultivars #2 – Cider Apples by C. Thornton

French cider ref: Pommiers a’ Cidre by J M Bore et J Fleckinger

NSW DPI website includes descriptions of many commercial apples cider apples and pears.

Website for the Toora Heritage Pear Orchard

Website for the Heritage Fruits Society of Victoria

www.nationalfruitcollection.org.uk – search NFC database

www.orangepippin.com has descriptions and photos of many varieties

The Herefordshire Pomona (on CD) by Woolhope Naturalists Field Club – 1885 see ref: Pomona CD Editor@marcherapple.net.

Les Croquers de Pommes – www.croquers-de-pommes.ass.fr

Oak.org.au lists apples held at the Grove (Tasmania) Heritage Nursery

Scientifichorticulture.com.au has photos of Grove apples with some descriptions

And Last but not least – See Miapple.com.au website.

FRENCH TRANSLATION – I use Google Translate

REFERENCES DISAGREE OR MORE THAN ONE NAMED

Hoover=Black Coal -The European references differ from the USA – the apple tree at Miapple Farm matches the USA reference.

Liberty has several references – the 1960 reference is similar in description to the Miapple tree.

NICE APPLE NO REFERENCE

The following apples – some in the Miapple collection are not listed in the reference books.

Warragul Surprise – nice tasting apple found by the side of the road near Warragul.

Huonville Crab – red fleshed crab from Tasmania, bright pink flowers, dark red leaves like prunis.

Eagle Point Star – found near Lakes Entrance, Victoria by East Gippsland apple group – reputed to have a red star in the middle when cut in half. The Miapple example has variegated red flesh.

Lady of the Snow – often talked about by older Tasmanians and thought to be a sport of Fameuse. I am yet to find an example of it.

Crotin – sourced from Pete the Permie in Monbulk, Victoria. L.green with pink cheeks resembles a Pink Lady but ripens earlier, sub acid flavour.

Boswell – comes from Clive Winmill's collection – listed in his book – small light green with red flush, few red stripes – lite sub-acid flavour.

Firikia – grown commercially by Greek apple growers in Harcourt, Victoria. Small elongated apple with pink cheeks. The Greeks cook it and smother it with syrup as a desert dish. Examples grown at Miapple Farm do not so far match the commercial fruit.

SELDOM FLOWERS NEVER FRUITS

The following varieties in the Miapple collection have never flowered or fruited – so they can't be confirmed until they fruit.

Tremletts Bitter – Flowers late week 4 if at all – no fruit in 8 years at Miapple Farm

Bess Poole – seldom flowers – did once in week 9 – never fruited

Belle de Magny – supposed to flower very late – the Miapple example has never flowered or fruited.

Devonshire Quarrendon – has only ever flowered once recently in week 2

MISNAMERS

Melba at Miapple Farm matches the European description references.

Red Astrachan at Miapple Farm matches the European description too.

Both Melba and Red Astrachan look alike and flower and fruit at the same time – some experts say that both are the same apple and are in fact Red Astrachan.

Webar Klar obtained from a collector in Macedon, Victoria. White Transparent is also known as Weisser Klar. The old German character for double “ss” looks like a capital B. Webar Klar is actually Weisser Klar otherwise listed in UK references as White Transparent.

Firikia – Miapple farm was supplied a “Firikia” (from Greece) by a collector near Ballarat but the apple produced looked and tasted (sour) like a Gooseberry Pippin.

Grossielle from Grove Tasmania differs from description in shape and colour.

Reinette de Macon from Grove Tasmania differs from description and russetting

Royal Jubilee from Grove Tasmania differs from European description.

Summer Pearmain from Grove Tasmania differs from descriptions – may be Claygate Pearmain

WHEN IT'S RIPE

Granny Smith is a green apple with a sub-acid flavour – ask anyone. But wait until it is truly ripe (it turns yellow) at the end of autumn – it becomes sweeter,

Sturmer Pippin may well be a parent of Granny Smith – it has similar traits. If picked early autumn it has sub-acid flavour useful for making cider. If left on the shelf until early next spring it turns

yellow and sweetens while on the shelf.

SYNONYMS AND TRADEMARKS

Black Winesap=Kinnards Choice, It took me months to find the description of Black Winesap until an old apple expert told me its synonym is Kinnards Choice. Being of USA origin the US reference books tend not to have cross referencing of synonyms.

Trade marks are commonly used as an attempt to prevent private propagation and sale of varieties where the Patent period has run out as with the following;

Royal Gala (a sport of Gala) has heavier red stripes than Gala.

Pink Lady (originally Cripps Pink) is a registered trademark in many countries,

Sundowner (originally Cripps Red) has same parentage as Pink Lady

Monty's Surprise – (also known as Wanganui Monty or Full Monty) is a registered trade mark was a roadside apple found in Wanganui New Zealand

A new name to hit the market recently is Tiger Fuji and I am yet to find out if claims are made to naming rights or plant propagation rights as a variation to Fuji.

SIZE MATTERS

The size of apples can depend on the season or the extent that a heavy crop has been thinned. Small generally means smaller than a tennis ball in size. Medium indicates from tennis ball up to baseball size and large is bigger than a baseball.

SHAPE

Whereas I try to describe the overall general shape of the many apples on the tree, European descriptions try to cover the full spectrum of shapes with alternative descriptions like “globular” which means round. I find round, flat round, elongated round and conical round, conical flat or elongated flat cover most of the general shapes. As to extra shape to the general shape I find lumpy, fivecrown base, ribbed and asymmetrical covers most.

FRUIT COLOUR ALLOWANCES

Seasonal differences can effect colour. On Miapple Farm if the ripening period is warm and cloudy, Fuji gets a brown flush colour over the green base. If the ripening period is sunny (less cloud) the Fuji has a red flush over green. Our Pink Lady fruits stay green and then suddenly turn pink with the first frost.

Some descriptions will show an apple colour as orange (as seen from a distance) when looking at the colour close up it is a yellow undercolour with a pink or brown flush.

A brown patch on the sunny side of an apple may not be a flush colour – it may be sunburn. A flush colour may not cover the whole apple – some will describe a pink flush on the sunny side as “pink cheeks”

TEXTURE & FLAVOURS

The climate and season can have a marked effect of texture and flavour of apples. Opalescent is described in some of the UK texts as a rather bland tasting apple and in Australia it can also be rather bland in a mild summer. If the summer is hot, dry and sunny like Australia had in the drought years around 2010 the flavours and sweetness come out in Opalescent to the extent that it was voted the best tasting apple at the Melbourne apple festival for two years running.

Some of the early apples become floury soon after picking like White Transparent, Burgundy and Gravenstein but are popular for their superior flavour.

One of my favourite late apples Yates has a very firm almost woody texture but its keeping ability and flavour attests to its popularity as an export apple in the pre-war years.

For a popular crisp sweet mid-season apple you can't go past a Golden Delicious and there are many descendant varieties that inherited the sweet/crisp taste along with the self fertile qualities that make it popular for the heavy cropping ability.