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When to Harvest Your Apples

These are the signs of ripening that indicate when fruit is at its prime:

Color: Watch for apples to change to the ripe color: from green to yellow, for yellow apples; for red ones, a change from the basic dull green undercolor to bright yellows and reds.

Seeds: Until it is ripe, an apple usually has white seeds. Then they turn brown.

Feel: Ripeness is often heralded by the appearance of a waxy coating that makes apple polishing possible. This is a reliable sign.

Taste: This is the most dependable test. When the apple on the tree begins to lose its decided tartness, harvest time has come.

To pick an apple, bend it upward quickly. If it is ready, it will break cleanly and not tear the spur as it comes.

The apples you want to store should be picked a little early, just as they are getting ripe. You can store apples in a cool place, and it shouldn't be so dry that they will shrivel. In Shakespeare's day they called such specimens "apple-johns," and Falstaff complains in the first part of "King Henry IV": "My skin hangs about me like an old lady's loose gown; I am withered like an old apple-john."

Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension, Albany County