



# Apples

## Not nearly as American as you think

BY KATE MORSE

In our minds, “America” and “apples” go together, as in Johnny Applesseed, apple pie, “The Big Apple,” and even the Applegate.

According to allaboutapples.com, edible apples originated in western China, and there is no known American native. Edible apples didn’t even arrive in Oregon until 1847, when a migrant Iowan brought them here, notes Heirloom Orchards, of the Hood River Valley, in their website.

Now, whatever American-ism apples ever had is under threat from an increase in Chinese apple production. In 2007, *The Dallas Morning News* reported that China produces approximately 65% of the apples grown in the world.

China is also the top supplier of the concentrate used in making the apple juice consumed in the United States, accounting for 40% of the apple juice quaffed here. China sent us 4.5 million gallons of apple juice concentrate in 1996. By 2005, that number was 249.54 million gallons. The brands that use the Chinese concentrate—and might or might not state that clearly on the label—are store brands, Mott’s, TreeTop, Welch’s and Tropicana.

*The Dallas Morning News* said that America is still holding on to her apples in the fresh fruit market. They quoted a U.S. Apple Association spokesman in saying that when China began her push to be a major exporter of fruits and vegetables, about a decade earlier, our growers concentrated more on fresh fruit. *USA Today* noted in a 2007 article that the American focus on fresh fruits was in response to USDA concerns that imported fruits from China might carry pests that would infect our crops.

Although China is focusing on apple juice concentrate, it has affected apple growing in the U.S. by taking a nasty bite out of mid-sized orchards. The most recently available statistics from the USDA on orchards producing 1-2.49 million dollars in annual revenue

illustrate this decline: in 2003, Oregon had 3,700 acres of apples in this economic class, while the U.S. had 195,436; in 2008, Oregon had 3,100 acres of apples in this economic class, while the U.S. had 151,300.

Interestingly, USDA data shows that Oregon actually gained apple acreage on small operations—orchards producing 1-10 million dollars—going from 1,600 acres in 2003 to 1,700 acres in 2008. At the top end, measuring orchards producing 5 million dollars per year and more, both Oregon and the U.S. had substantial acreage gains.

Not to get into trade-balance arguments here, China is the fourth-leading recipient of American agricultural products, behind Canada, Mexico and Japan. The USDA says China took 10.5% of our agricultural exports in 2008.

Agriculturally speaking, grass seeds (bentgrass, rye, fescue) are Oregon’s top products, and mint—spearmint and peppermint—of all things, is our number two. For Oregon, the humble apple ranks number 28 in our list of commodities.

But that’s no reason for us not to be annoyed with the Chinese: the USDA received its apple data from Oregon State University estimates indicating we produced 29.7 million dollars in apples in 2006; in 2008, that number dropped to 27.8 million dollars. And this was not part of an over-all decline. In fact, Oregon’s contribution to the U.S. agricultural economy grew by more than 100 million dollar between 2004 and 2008, according to USDA statistics.

Perhaps we should start looking beyond toothpaste for uses of mint.

Kate Morse is a Certified Classical Homeopath who is happy to debunk the myth that you shouldn’t use mint toothpaste if you’re taking a homeopathic remedy.

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## Lightning, smoke and 9-1-1

BY SANDY SHAFFER

By the time you read this it will be summer, and the possibility for lightning storms coming through the Rogue Valley will be high. Would you know what to do if you saw a lightning strike in the forest, and then a column of smoke? Accurately observing and reporting what you see is vital to a quick response by firefighters.

After interviewing local 9-1-1, fire and state forestry folks, I collected some tips for effectively reporting smoke, from whatever the source. Number one: Stay calm and be able to articulate your message. Most important: be able to tell the 9-1-1 operator where you are. (Hint: Keep your legal property description next to the telephone. This can help save valuable response time.) The 9-1-1 computer system instantly shows your address on the computer screen when you call from your home, but operators *will always* verify the address that you’re calling from in case you’ve recently moved. If you’re calling from a cell phone, you’ll need to identify where you are: an address, mileage marker, road name, etc. And, *stay available* for a call-back if you’re on a cell phone.

It’s also important to report which direction you are looking. I live on top of a hill, so I do what the lookouts do—I use a compass to tell which direction I’m looking! If a compass is a bit intimidating, learn where north, south, east and west are from your home, and write it down.

So now the important details to report “smokes”: Did you see lightning in the area? How long ago? Can you see flames? If so, can you see anyone manning the

fire? How far away from you is the smoke or fire? (A tough, but important question to answer.) Can you see the base of the flames or smoke column?

If so, which hillside would it be on? Or, is it over a ridge, down a gulch, etc? This is important, because crews need to figure out how to reach a smoke report—which roads to take. Direction and physical landmarks like ridges and gulches are best. Saying it’s “just above the old Johnson place” doesn’t help at all!

And, very important—what color is the smoke? White (an initial strike or the flames are out), black (a structure, vehicle or very heavy fuels), brown (heavy or green fuels), pink (grass) or blue (grass or light brush)? Is it a vertical column or is it drifting?

And the tricky question—how do you tell a column of smoke from a “water dog” or drift of heavy mist that often follows a storm? Experts suggest watching the smoke for a few minutes to see if it remains white or if it is bluish. Is it a straight column rising up or is it beginning to drift and dissipate? If after 5-10 minutes you still think it’s looking like a column of smoke, *call it in!* Don’t wait any longer.

Our local fire agencies gear up and work together whenever a lightning storm comes through. Knowing how to accurately spot and report “smokes” really helps their efforts!

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*“Your own property is concerned when your neighbor's house is on fire.”*

*Horace*

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