Apple Maturity

Results of Recent Surveys

Two surveys we did this summer, the price survey and the New England apple scab management survey, are summarized in accompanying documents. Thanks those of you who participated.

Harvesting and Storing Japanese Plums

We are now picking early Japanese plum varieties, Early Golden and Methley, and will begin picking Shiro next week. Plums normally need two to three harvests since they ripen unevenly, but ripening can be rapid with only a few days between consecutive pickings. Like apples, most plum varieties continue to ripen off the tree, so they can be picked before they are fully ripe and allowed to ripen at room temperature before marketing. Plums picked at a mature, but not fully ripe stage are less prone to bruising. To prevent bruising, do not stack them more than 3-fruit deep in the container. Fruit can be picked before they are fully ripe if heavy rain is imminent and fruit cracking likely.

Plums are ready to eat when firmness drops to 1-2 lbs., but shelf life is very short at this stage. Plums ripen rather rapidly after harvest and will become too soft and unmarketable in a matter of days if picked too ripe. The optimum stage of ripeness for picking depends on how soon they will be marketed and the availability of cold storage. Skin color and flesh firmness are good indicators of when to pick. Pressure is measured with an 8-mm probe rather than the 11-mm probe on the same pressure testers used for apples. Because of the many varieties and large difference in flesh firmness, there is no clear standard fruit firmness for use as a harvest index. With the few varieties that I am studying this year, a firmness of 2 to 4 lbs. seems to be ripe enough to allow them to continue ripening after harvest, but too green for immediate marketing.

Plums have a cold storage life of about three weeks, and will develop chilling injury if kept in cold storage for longer periods or when they are stored at temperatures above 34°F. Plums have shorter storage life when stored at temperatures near 40°F.
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If you are a person with a disability and will need an accommodations to participate in this program, please call Highmoor Farm at 933-2100 to discuss your needs. Receiving requests for accommodations at least 7 days before the program provides a reasonable amount of time to meet the request, however all requests will be accepted.