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## Apples from Rhode Island

Robert E. Gough

*University of Rhode Island*

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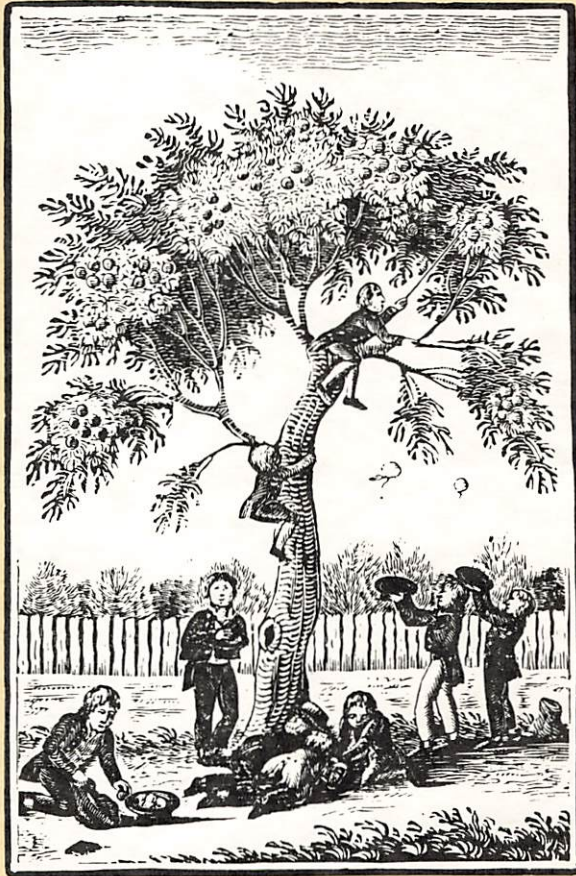
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# Apples from Rhode Island

Robert E. Gough  
Department of Plant and Soil Science



College of Resource Development  
University of Rhode Island  
Cooperative Extension Service Bulletin 206

# Apples from Rhode Island

by Robert E. Gough  
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### Notes:

- The term "cultivar" is technically more precise than "variety" and is therefore used throughout.
- Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement is implied by Cooperative Extension.



### The Author

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A specialist in fruit culture, Dr. Gough has lectured widely in Rhode Island. He is a frequent contributor to *Country Journal* magazine and has reported on apple and blueberry research in several scientific journals.

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Today the University of Rhode Island College of Resource Development carries on teaching and research in a wider range of subjects than ever before. Its extension arm, the Cooperative Extension Service, brings the results of these activities as well as the work of other land-grant universities across the country to the people of Rhode Island.

This bulletin is an example of one way by which the College accomplishes its extension mission. A list of publications on other subjects is available on request from the College of Resource Development Information Office, Woodward Hall, Kingston, RI 02881 (792-2465).

## Introduction

Popular opinion holds that today's apples have been developed for red coloration, ability to store well for long periods, or for their appropriateness for processing — factors other than flavor. And with the popularity of early Americana, a desire for self-sufficiency and "growing your own," there seems to be a revival of interest in old-time apple cultivars, "the kind Grandma used to bake." This interest is reflected in magazine articles of the mid-1970's.

Without presenting a scientific discussion of old versus new apple cultivars, it may be interesting to offer an historical look at the apples of early Rhode Island. Whether as an historical exercise or an attempt to recapture nearly-lost qualities, the growing of old-time apples from Rhode Island may provide a challenge to the best of horticulturists.



## General History

The common apple (*Malus domestica*) that is used today for processing and fresh markets was introduced to the colonies by early settlers of nearly every nationality. Most of them brought apple seeds which, along with seeds produced by them, were quickly spread throughout the country. By the middle of the eighteenth century, apple trees were maintained by nearly every settler and agrarian Indian tribe.

Early apple orchards of Rhode Island were primarily composed of seedling trees, most having no names. And like most fruit trees, apple trees do not "come true to seed." That is, a seed from a 'McIntosh' apple probably will not produce a tree bearing 'McIntosh' fruit. In essence, it will be a completely different apple. Therefore, each of the old trees that grew from seeds was a new cultivar. Magness (1937) estimated that well over two million apple seedlings have grown and fruited in the United States over the past 250 years.

The true character of an apple cultivar can only be transferred through asexual propagation, usually by grafting. By the early eighteenth century, named cultivars began to be widely disseminated, indicating that grafting was being done. From millions of seedlings, thousands of cultivars were selected and named, many solely on the basis of personal preference. Sturtevant (1919) notes that Downing (1866) lists 643 cultivars and that the American Pomological Society (1879) endorses 321 cultivars. Barry (1870) reported that over 4,000 named cultivars were grown in the U.S. at that time. Beach (1905) estimates that approximately 7,500 named cultivars were grown in the U.S. up until that time. Hundreds more have been added since.

William Blaxton (Blackstone), who planted the first orchard in Massachusetts some time prior to 1625, later moved to Study Hill, near Pawtucket, R.I. around 1635.

*"At this new plantation, he lived uninterrupted for many years, and there raised an orchard, the first that ever bore apples in the colony of Rhode Island."* (Hopkins, 1765)

In this orchard originated the 'Yellow Sweeting', probably the first named apple cultivar to originate in the U.S. (Hedrick, 1950). This

cultivar was popular as a rootstock, and scions of it were distributed and grown in R.I. and in other parts of New England. Prior to the introduction of the 'Rhode Island Greening' (c. 1775) however,

*"most New Englanders if they planted grafted trees at all, which few did, grafted seedling trees on Pearmain, Hightop Sweetings, Pig Nose, Foxwell, Bachelor's Button, Yellow Sweeting, Blackston's, Kreton Pippen, Long Red, and Russetin" . . . (Hedrick, 1950)*

indicating that named cultivars were not yet widely popular except as rootstocks. The 'Rhode Island Greening', the "first really good apple to originate in New England," probably originated near Newport, R.I., from a seed planted in 1748. This cultivar was rapidly disseminated to nearly every northern state and became one of the most popular apples of all times. Along with it, apple orchards in R.I. also included the 'Black Gilliflower,' 'Roxbury Russet,' and 'Westfield Seek-no-further,' four of the most commonly grown cultivars in the U.S. during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The founder of the state of Rhode Island, Roger Williams, apparently never had an orchard, though he greatly admired this fruit. The apple is, however, closely associated with him. Williams died in 1683, and was buried in a small cemetery just east of Benefit Street, in Providence, R.I. An apple tree grew near his grave. When his remains were disinterred in 1860, a root of the apple tree, in the shape of a human skeleton, was found in the grave. This great man, who once made as a peace offering to a representative of King Philip "a glass of wine . . . and a bushel of apples" had been memorialized by the fruit he so admired.

Most apples grown in colonial Rhode Island and New England were used for cider, the universally popular beverage of that period. Vast quantities of it were consumed each year. For example, in the year 1767, the per capita consumption of cider in Massachusetts was 1.14 barrels (1 barrel = approximately 32 gallons) (Orton, 1973).

In 1751, the Rev. Dr. MacSparran, residing at the Glebe in South County, wrote in his diary for October:

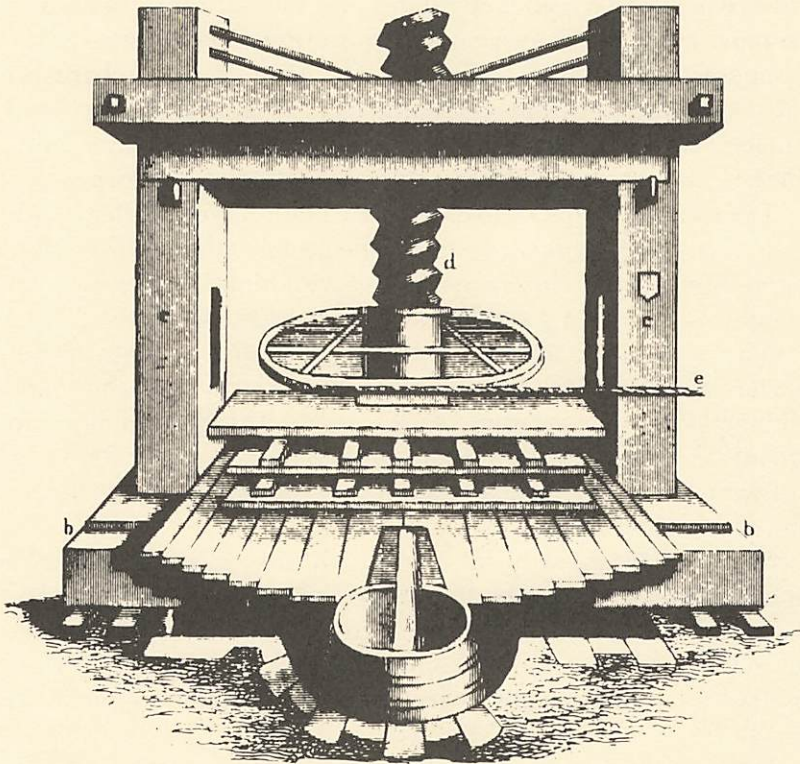
*"12. We finished gathering up and carting apples and Pom-*

*pions, finished Walmsley's 2 barrels and he carted them home with my cart."*

*"15. Sent a hogshead (63 gallons) of Apples and 4 Barrels Cyder to the Ferry for Capt. Wilkinson."*

*"18. Ground our last pressing of Apples and finished putting up some for winter."*

*"19. (Saturday) finished pressing good Cyder. Lord, prepare us for Sunday." (Woodward, 1971)*





## Apples of Rhode Island Origin

Most of the apples found in earlier Rhode Island orchards were unnamed seedling cultivars brought in from other locations. Over the years, however, some cultivars that originated in this state were deemed worthy of naming and propagating. Thirteen of these are mentioned in historical records, some with descriptions, many having no known source of availability.

Many more seedlings have originated in Rhode Island, possibly some even acquiring local names, but records of these have long since been lost. The locations of the original tree of most cultivars is difficult to ascertain though an approximate location for most is given.

Following is a list of cultivars generally considered to be of Rhode Island origin. Descriptions of these and their current availability have been listed where known. 'Rhode Island Seek-no-further' and 'Rhode Island Sweet' are synonyms for 'Ferris' and 'Pumpkin Sweet' respectively and are not of Rhode Island origin.

### Bars

*Estimated Date of Origin* — Early 1800's

*Synonyms* — 'Bar', 'Barr'

*Historical* — This cultivar was perhaps of local importance only, since no mention of it was found in pomological literature other than Downing (1886). It should not be confused with 'Bar', also cited by Downing (1886), which is apparently a completely different cultivar, the origin of which is unknown. Coxe (1817), Cole (1849), and the *Magazine of Horticulture* (1853) mention 'Bar' but it is not known if it is the one of Rhode Island origin.

*Tree Characteristics* — Unknown

*Fruit Characteristics* — The fruit was large in size, round, pale yellow and nearly covered with red with a few russet spots. The stem was long and slender. The flesh was white, tender, juicy, mildly flavored, and subacid. It was considered of very good quality and suitable for eating fresh, being in season in September.

*Availability* — Unknown

## Bowen

*Estimated Date of Origin* — 1850

*Synonyms* — 'Bowen Favorite', 'Bowen's Favorite'

*Historical* — Barry (1883) lists this cultivar (entry #29) as "worthy of mention." Bourn (1891) states that:

" 'Bowen's Favorite' is a local apple of great beauty, is good, and for several years has been the handsomest dish at our exhibitions."

*Tree Characteristics* — Unknown

*Fruit Characteristics* — The fruit was medium in size, round-oblate, and red. It was considered of good quality and suitable for market purposes, being in season in the autumn.

*Availability* — Unknown

## Dyer

*Estimated Date of Origin* — 1650

*Synonyms* — 'Bard,' 'Bard Apple,' 'Beard Burden,' 'Bergamott,' 'Bullripe,' 'Coe's Spice,' 'Golden Spice,' 'Harris White Hall,' 'Holly Crown,' 'Mygatt's Bergamott,' 'Pinneo's Favorite,' 'Pomme Royal,' 'Pomme Royale,' 'Pomme Water,' 'Pommer Water,' 'Smithfield Spice,' 'Tompkin's,' 'Tompkin's Apple,' 'White Spice,' 'Woodstock.'

*Historical* — In a letter appearing in *The Horticulturist* 2:289, 1847-48, Stephan H. Smith of Smithfield, R.I., President of the Rhode Island Horticultural Society, wrote that the 'Pomme Royale' apple has been "known with [sic] us for an hundred years," judging from the age of the trees. He considered it, doubtless, of French origin, having been introduced into Rhode Island by French settlers. A man named Dyer apparently sent one of Mr. Smith's 'Pomme Royale' apples to the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, claiming it to be a new seedling cultivar. The Society immediately renamed it 'Dyer'. The editors of *The Horticulturist* in a note on p. 289 of the same issue, describe 'Pomme Royale' as an autumn apple "very distinct and of greate excellence." Kenrick (1835) wrote that this apple, known as 'Pomme Royale' in Revolutionary times, was named

'Dyer' early in the 19th century, when the Massachusetts Horticultural Society "so named it for Messrs. Dyer, of Cranston, R.I., and the gentleman who lately brought this fruit into notice in Massachusetts." Downing (1846) stated that the first 'Dyer' tree grew in Johnston, R.I. and Glackens (1953) wrote that many different French apples were known as 'Pomme Royale'.

Following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, 400,000 Huguenots fled France, some of them coming to Rhode Island. Though most immigrants during that period carried only fruit seeds to their new homes (Hedrick, 1950), a few of the more well-to-do may have brought grafted trees since grafting was at that time widely practiced in Europe. Hence, the possibility remains that the 'Pomme Royale' or 'Dyer' may have been introduced into Rhode Island from France. In fact, Downing (1853) states that this cultivar is of French origin, having been brought into the United States more than a century before. It was grown in Rhode Island during the Revolution (Beach, 1905).

*Tree Characteristics* — The tree was small, vigorous, and commonly topworked to 'Tolman Sweet' or 'Northern Spy'. It bore at an early age and generally yielded good, but biennial crops.

*Fruit Characteristics* — The fruit was medium to large in size, round, and sometimes obscurely ribbed. The skin was smooth, pale yellow to white, slightly russeted, and often had a brownish blush on the exposed side. The flesh was light-yellow, fine-grained, very crisp, tender, aromatic, mildly subacid, highly flavored and considered of excellent quality. It was in season during September and October.

Glackens (1953) states that the fruit is too tender for market but has "extraordinary delicacy and finesse". He cites other pomologists who describe the fruit as follows:

*Kenrick (1835): "rich, saccharine, subacid, excellent."*

*C. Downing (1851): "very sprightly, tender, excellent."*

*P. Barry (1883): "one of the best of dessert apples."*

*S.A. Beach (1905): "one of the very finest of dessert apples."*

*U.P. Hedrick (1938): "the quintessence of the apple orchard."*

*Availability* — See #2, Source List, p. 21

## Esten

*Estimated Date of Origin* — 1800

*Synonyms* — Unknown

*Historical* — This cultivar was probably only of passing importance, since its mention is very rare in pomological literature (Ragan, 1905).

*Tree Characteristics* — The tree was vigorous and productive.

*Fruit Characteristics* — The fruit was large in size, round-oblong, and slightly ribbed. The skin was smooth, yellow, and sometimes blushed. The flesh was yellow, crisp, juicy, slightly aromatic, and mildly subacid. It was considered of good quality and suitable for eating fresh, being in season in November.

*Availability* — Unknown

## Fenner

*Estimated Date of Origin* — 1840

*Synonyms* — 'Fenner Sweet'

*Historical* — Mentioned in *Proceedings of the American Pomological Society*, 1860, and in Ragan (1905).

*Tree Characteristics* — Unknown

*Fruit Characteristics* — Sweet

*Availability* — Unknown

## Garfield

*Estimated Date of Origin* — 1870

*Synonyms* — Unknown

*Historical* — Bourn (1891), made the following report to the American Pomological Society:

*"Another apple, named 'Garfield', which has some of the characteristics of the 'Porter', is a promising cultivar, and I hope to send you specimens of these at your next meeting in September."*

This cultivar is distinct from another 'Garfield' originating in either Georgia or Illinois (*Proceedings of the American Pomological Society*, 1883) and from 'Garfield Sweet', originating in Wisconsin and described in the Clark Hewitt catalogue, Clark Hewitt Nurseries, Waupun, Wisconsin (Ragan, 1905).

*Tree Characteristics* — Unknown

*Fruit Characteristics* — Unknown

*Availability* — Unknown



### Peck's Pleasant

*Estimated Date of Origin* — 1810

*Synonyms* — 'Peck Pleasant', 'Waltz Apple', 'Watts Apple', 'Peck', 'Dutch Greening'

*Historical* — Downing (1886), states that this cultivar "has long been cultivated in Rhode Island, where we think, it originated." This renowned horticulturist further states that this cultivar "deserves extensive dissemination." In 1890, Lyon reported that it was generally and deservedly popular in Michigan, with its "beautiful and ex-

cellent" fruit. In 1849, 'Peck's Pleasant' was entered as number 24 in a select list of 50 apple cultivars worthy of consideration (*Magazine of Horticulture*, p. 163), and somewhat later was considered popular for dessert, kitchen, and market use (*Proceedings of the American Pomological Society*, 1909).

*Tree Characteristics* — The tree was medium in size, upright-spreading, and moderately vigorous, but quite susceptible to canker and root rot and was often a shy bearer (Beach 1905, Hedrick, 1922) or a good regular bearer (Downing, 1886). A low percentage of first-class fruit was usually produced (Hedrick, 1922).

*Fruit Characteristics* — The fruit is medium to large in size and somewhat variable in shape, those fruit on the lower branches of old trees being flat, while those on the upper branches nearly conic. Most of the fruit is generally round or irregularly elliptical and obscurely ribbed, often with an indistinct furrow of one side. The stem is medium-short and usually fleshy, the skin smooth, moderately-thick, tough and usually green with a little dark red when first harvested, becoming clear yellow with a bright blush on the sunny side when ripe. The flesh is yellowish, firm, tender, fine-grained, juicy, crisp, subacid and aromatic; the fruit was considered very good to best in quality, being in season in the late fall.

*Availability* — See 8, 10, 15, Source List p. 22

## Rhode Island Greening

*Estimated Date of Origin* — 1748

*Synonyms* — 'Rhode Island', 'Bell Dubois', 'Burlington Greening', 'Greening', 'Greenling Von Rhode Island', 'Green's Inn', 'Grunling von Rhode Island', 'Hampshire Greening', 'Jersey Greening', 'Russine', 'Verte de l'Ile de Rhodes', 'Vert De Rhode Island', 'Apple from Green's Inn', 'Green's Inn apple from Rhode Island'.

*Historical* — There can be little doubt that this cultivar originated in Rhode Island. However, several localities in the state have proclaimed themselves the originators of this apple. In Foster, at the Thomas R. Drowne farm at Mt. Hygeia, stood a 'Rhode Island Greening' tree, supposedly over 200 years old. This was supposed by some to be the original tree, and an illustrated description of it ap-

peared in the *Providence Sunday Journal* for October 2, 1898. However, scions cut from a sprout growing near the base of the tree were sent by Senator Drowne in 1900 to the New York Agricultural Experiment Station. Trees propagated from these scions bore fruit that was entirely different from the 'Rhode Island Greening', indicating that the tree was grafted and therefore could not have been the original seedling tree.

On the farm once owned by Frederick W. Winslow on the northern end of Fruit Hill in Smithfield, stood a 'Rhode Island Greening' tree locally known as the "Daughter Tree". This tree supposedly developed from a limb broken from the "Mother Tree" or original 'Rhode Island Greening' tree, in the September gale of 1815. Since occurrences of this type, wherein a whole limb of an apple tree roots and develops into a tree, are exceedingly rare, or non-existent, little credence can be given to this story. Woodward (1971) states that the original tree of this cultivar grew on the estate of Governor Brenton, Hammersmith, near Newport.

It is the general consensus among pomologists that the 'Rhode Island Greening' originated near Newport in the vicinity of a place known as Green's End.

*"Where, in olden times, there was a tavern kept by Mr. Green, who raised apple trees from seed. Among the trees thus produced was one which bore a large green apple. The scions of this tree were in such demand by the people who stopped there as guests, that the tree died from excessive cutting and exhaustion. The fruit which resulted from grafting with these scions was known by different names". . . (Beach, 1905)*

Woodward (1971) states that a Mr. Green had a tavern in Middletown and always kept on the bar a bowl of "Greene apples" for his guests. According to Orton (1973) the stump of the original tree was still visible in 1870.

This cultivar was introduced into the old Plymouth Colony from Newport in 1765 and from there into Ohio in 1796 by General Putnam. It was rated number one in a select list of apples prepared by Samuel Walker, President of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society (*Magazine of Horticulture*, 1849, p. 162-63) and was listed in the American Pomological Society cultivar list of 1852 as "a fruit

worthy of general cultivation." Hovey (1851) speaks of this cultivar thus:

*"as a cooking apple, the Greening is unsurpassed; and as a dessert fruit of its season, has few equals."*

Along with Tolman Sweet' these were rated as some of the best apples grown in Vermont (*Proceedings of the American Pomological Society*, 1883, p. 113). Downing (1886) states that it

*"is such a universal favorite and is so generally known, that it seems almost superfluous to give a description of it. It succeeds well in almost all of the northern sections of the States, and on a great variety of soils, and where it does succeed is one of the most esteemed and profitable among early winter fruits."*

Beach (1905) states that it is

*"one of the very best cooking apples, almost the peer of 'Esopus Spitzenburg' and much better than 'Baldwin' for all culinary purposes."*

Hedrick (1922) calls the 'Greening' the "favorite green apple of the continent." Further, he states (1950) that the 'Rhode Island Greening' was the first really good apple to originate in New England. The average annual production of this cultivar in the United States has risen steadily from around 88 million pounds during World War II to 151 million pounds in the period from 1969-1971. It is rated as number 11 in a list of 16 commercially important apples in the United States, and is now grown primarily in the northeastern portion of the United States for the processing trade. Another important world production area for this cultivar is the Soviet Union (Childers, 1973). This is the only Rhode Island apple that has reached international renown, though two others — 'Peck's Pleasant' and 'Tolman Sweet' — were nationally known in the past. 'Rhode Island Greening' is also the only Rhode Island apple that is still grown commercially to any extent.

The 'Greening' has been the subject of more tales than any other apple originating in Rhode Island. Thomas Hazard, in his famous *Jonny Cake Papers* (1888), relates the following stories:

*"On the north, contiguous to Vaucuse, in Portsmouth, R.I.,*



the residence of 'Shepherd Tom', there lies the old Isaac Chase farm, which, in the olden time was owned and occupied, in the summer season, by Mr. (Judge Metcalf) Bowler, a rich East India merchant of Newport. Mr. Bowler had a beautiful garden and took great delight in beautifying his grounds and hot-houses with exotics from all parts of the world. On one occasion a Captain Green Chausan, of one of Mr. Bowler's East India ships, chanced to rescue from shipwreck a prince of the royal blood of Persia, whose father, in the fervor of his gratitude for saving and restoring to him his son, presented to the captain from his own garden, situated on the site of the ancient Garden of Eden, a young apple tree growing in a porcelain tub, which was declared to be one of the few direct lineal descendants of the tree of knowledge. On his arrival in Newport, Captain Chausan as in duty bound presented the young tree to his employer, Mr. Bowler, who was delighted beyond measure with the precious gift, and thought to guard and protect it by placing it in a hot-house . . . , but was admonished in a dream by an angel, claiming to be Mother Eve, to do no such thing, as the climate of Rhode Island was, if anything, a little more favorable to its growth than that of southern Assyria, from whence it was removed. Mr. Bowler had such faith in the vision that he had the tree carefully removed from the tub . . . and transplanted into Rhode



Island soil, where it grew and flourished . . . and finally developed into what has ever since been called the Rhode Island greening.

"The Rhode Island greening is acknowledged the world over to be the richest and finest flavored apple in the Universe, provided it grows on the sunny outside branches of the tree, and is allowed to hang and ripen until the last of October, or middle of November, if possible. I want readers, however, to understand that nowhere else on earth, except in the region I have indicated, viz.: the Garden of Eden in Assyria and the Garden of Eden in Rhode Island, the ancient Atlantis, can the Rhode Island greening be grown in perfection . . . nowhere out of the hallowed limits I have designated can an apple of any kind be found that compares in flavor with the Rhode Island greening of Eden, any more than a swill-fed, hot-water picked, live-stuffed, French or Irish baked New York turkey compares in delightful delicacy and flavor with a grass-hopper, corn and Tallman sweeting fed, dry-dressed, a'la Phillis wasted Rhode Island turkey.

"During the latter part of the revolutionary war, the Marquis Lafayette used to stay . . . at Mr. Bowler's in Portsmouth. On the occasion of a visit of General Washington to Newport, Mr. Bowler gave him a social dinner party . . . limited to eight in number. . . . These consisted of General Washington, the Marquis Lafayette and his host, Mr. Bowler, Count Rochambeau, Admiral DeTierney, Rev. Ezra Styles, Parson Hopkins, and William Ellery. . . . Mr. Bowler had prepared for the occasion, a dozen bottles of cider, made from the sunny-side half of mellow Rhode Island greenings gathered from the tree in November, which he had labeled Eden Champagne. Mine host had prepared a quantity of two kinds of the best brands of French champagne. . . . A sip was taken first of each kind from full glasses of the French wine, but when the Eden champagne was raised by his guests to their lips, in every instance the glass was drained. . . . The French gentlemen severally testified that they had never tasted anything so divine at any court in Europe as Eden champagne, and . . . they one and all declared that it could be no other than the fabled nectar of the gods."

*Tree Characteristics* — The tree is large, strong, vigorous, somewhat drooping and wide-spreading, cold tender, and very productive. The pollen of this cultivar is infertile.

*Fruit Characteristics* — The fruit is medium to very large and uniform in size and shape, being round to round-oblate, sometimes obscurely ribbed. The skin is moderately thick, tough, smooth, waxy, and dark grassy-green in color, becoming greenish-yellow when ripe. It sometimes has a brownish-red blush on the exposed cheek. The flesh is yellow, fine-grained, firm, crisp, tender, juicy, slightly aromatic, acid, and peculiarly flavored. It is considered to be of very good quality, though it does show bruises readily and is quite susceptible to apple scab (Hedrick, 1925). Its season ranges from November to February (Downing, 1886; Beach, 1905).

*Availability* — See 1-8, 10, 12, 13-15, Source List, pp. 21-22

### **Shepardson**

*Estimated Date of Origin* — 1860

*Synonyms* — Unknown

*Historical* — Bourn (1891) stated that this cultivar was of local importance and that plantings of it were increasing.

*Tree Characteristics* — Unknown

*Fruit Characteristics* — Unknown

*Availability* — Unknown

### **Slug**

*Estimated Date of Origin* — 1820

*Synonyms* — 'Slug Sweeting'

*Historical* — Unknown

*Tree Characteristics* — Unknown

*Fruit Characteristics* — According to Ragan (1905) the fruit was medium to large in size, conic, and yellow, the flesh was sweet and was considered of good quality. The fruit was suitable for kitchen

use (culinary) and was in season in the autumn.

*Availability* — Unknown

### **Tolman Sweet**

*Estimated Date of Origin* — 1810

*Synonyms* — 'Brown's Golden Sweet', 'Tallman's Sweet', 'Tallman Sweeting', 'Tallman's Sweeting', 'Talman Sweet', 'Talman's Sweeting', 'Tolman Sweeting', 'Tolman's Sweeting'

*Historical* — Dr. Thacher (1822) was the first to mention this "old and justly admired apple," though he did not know its origin. By 1849, it was reported as being very extensively cultivated and one of the most common sweet apples to be found in any market place. It was considered superior for baking, but for fresh use "scarcely worthy of cultivation" (*Magazine of Horticulture*, 1849). Manning (1883) reported it a very popular baking apple in Vermont and ranked it with 'Rhode Island Greening' as the two best apples in Vermont. On the other hand, Downing (1886) ranked it as only a second rate table sort, but a very popular and profitable orchard sort owing, in part, to its great productiveness. In 1891, Manning supposed the apple to have originated in Dorchester, Mass., contradicting much of the available information concerning its origin. He further states that it had been long known in New York and was more generally grown in home orchards than any other cultivar. Hedrick (1922) reported that it was then "the leading sweet apple on the continent, liked for dessert and esteemed for culinary (pickling, boiling, baking)." The tree was also a favorite rootstock for topworking because of its hardiness (Beach, 1905). Downing (1886) stated that it was "a native of Rhode Island."

*Tree Characteristics* — The tree was upright-spreading in form, moderately vigorous, hardy, and productive. It began bearing at an early age and was considered a reliable, though biennial, cropper.

*Fruit Characteristics* — The fruit was somewhat below medium sized and fairly uniform in size and shape. It was nearly globular and obscurely ribbed, with a rather long, slender stem. The skin was pale yellow, sometimes blushed, tough, often with a suture line extending from cavity to the base. Light russet extended over the surface,

becoming concentric and conspicuous at the basin. The flesh was white, firm, somewhat hard, fine-grained, juicy, very sweet and of good quality. It was considered to be at its prime eating quality from November to April.

*Availability* — See 1, 9, 11, 12, 15, Source List, pp. 21-22

### **Yellow Russet**

*Estimated Date of Origin* — After 1640

*Synonyms* — Unknown

*Historical* — According to Woodward (1971), this apple originated on Governor Brenton's Hammersmith estate near Newport, but it is mentioned in none of the pomological literature researched.

*Tree Characteristics* — Unknown

*Fruit Characteristics* — Unknown

*Availability* — Unknown

### **Yellow Sweeting**

*Estimated Date of Origin* — 1635

*Synonyms* — 'Blaxton's Yellow Sweeting', 'Sweet Rhode Island Greening'

*Historical* — William Blaxton (Blackstone), a clergyman, who around 1623 planted the first orchard in Massachusetts on what is now the corner of Beacon and Charles Streets in Boston, arrived in Rhode Island in 1635 and planted the first orchard in this state on Study Hill, near Pawtucket or Cumberland, according to Lincoln (1837) as cited by Sturtevant (1919). Governor S. Hopkins (1765) wrote that:

*"He had the first of that sort (apples) called yellow sweetings, that were ever in this world; perhaps the richest and most delicious apple of the whole kind. Many of the trees, which he planted about one hundred and thirty years ago, are still pretty thrifty fruit bearing trees."*

Hedrick (1950) reports that this apple is now grown as 'Sweet Rhode

Island Greening' and that it is probably the first named apple to have originated in the United States. Between 1640 and the introduction of the 'Rhode Island Greening' (c. 1775) selected seedling trees were often grafted onto 'Yellow Sweeting' rootstocks because of the hardiness and vigor.

Downing (1886) lists a 'Yellow Sweet' as a native apple of unknown origin. The fruit was small, round, and light yellow with tender, white, sweet flesh and good quality. It was in season during October and November. In Appendix I of the same edition, p. 109, he also lists a 'Sweet Rhode Island Greening' (synonyms — 'New Rhode Island Greening' and 'Curtis Greening'). Though it was listed as being of unknown origin, Downing supposed it to have originated in Ohio. He described it thus:

*"Tree very vigorous, bears early, biennial cropper; fruit large to very large, oblate, often oblique, sides sometimes unequal; skin greenish yellow, often a shade of pale brown sometimes spotted with red, a few brown and gray dots; flesh yellow, moderately fine-grained, tender, juicy, sweet, rich, slightly aromatic and of excellent quality, often said to be the best sweet apple for December and January for culinary and market purposes."*

Beach (1905) describes a 'Sweet Greening' as an apple quite distinct from 'Green Sweet' but quite similar to the 'Sweet Rhode Island Greening' of Downing (1886). Other pomologists (Ragan, 1905) make 'Sweet Rhode Island Greening' synonymous with 'New Greening', 'Curtis Greening' and 'Illinois Greening'. 'Sweet Greening' was supposedly the female parent of 'Tolman Sweet'.

Stene (1910) reported that 'Yellow Sweeting' was grown commercially in Rhode Island at that time, and describes it as a sweet, blushed, green or yellow-white summer and fall apple.

*Tree Characteristics* — Uncertain

*Fruit Characteristics* — Uncertain, but probably green to yellow, and sweet.

*Availability* — Unknown



## Some Sources of Rhode Island Apple Trees

Listing of the nurseries does not necessarily mean endorsement or guarantee of merchandise, neither does it imply that there are no other nurseries providing similar materials. A reasonable number of scions may be requested from the Experiment Stations.

1. Baum's Nursery, RD 2, New Fairfield, Conn. 06810 (Trees)
2. Hilltop Orchards and Nurseries, Inc., Rt. 2, Hartford, Mich. 49057 (Trees)
3. Kelly Brothers, Inc., 23 Maple St., Dansville, N.Y. 14437 (Trees)
4. Henry Leuthardt, Inc., East Moriches, Long Island, N.Y. 11940 (Trees)
5. Massachusetts, Univ. of, Dept. of Plant and Soil Science, Amherst, Mass. 01002 (Scions)
6. J.E. Miller's Nurseries, Inc., Canadaigua, N.Y. 14424 (Trees)

7. New Mexico, State Univ. of, Dept. of Horticulture, Las Cruces, N.M. 88001 (Scions)
8. New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Dept. of Pomology, Geneva, N.Y. 14456 (Scions)
9. New York State Fruit Testing Cooperative Association, Geneva, N.Y. 14456 (Trees)
10. Pennsylvania, State Univ. of, Dept. of Horticulture, University Park, Pa. 16802 (Scions)
11. Saint Lawrence Nurseries, Heuvelton, N.Y. 13654 (Trees)
12. Southmeadow Fruit Gardens, 2363 Tilbury Place, Birmingham, Mich. 48009 (Trees)
13. Vermont, Univ. of, Dept. of Plant and Soil Science, Burlington, Vt. 05401 (Scions)
14. West Virginia, Univ. of, Dept. of Horticulture, Morgantown, W. Va. 26506 (Scions)
15. Worcester County Horticultural Society, 30 Elm St., Worcester, Mass. 01608 (Scions)
16. Zilke Brothers Nursery, Baroda, Mich. 49101 (Trees)





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