

## Human selection has narrowed apple varieties to a pitiful few

About 7,500 commercial apple producers in 36 states harvest 48,000 tons of fruit, second in production only to China. The average American consumes some 16 pounds of apples each year, making the apple the nation's most popular fruit after the banana.

... in the 19th century, apples came in all shapes and guises, some with rough, sandpapery skin, others as misshapen as potatoes, and ranging from the size of a cherry to bigger than a grapefruit. Colors ran the entire spectrum with a wonderful impressionistic array of patterning—flushes, stripes, splashes, and dots. There was an apple for every community, taste, purpose, and season, with winter varieties especially prized. Apples were used for making cider, baking, drying, eating out of hand—even as livestock feed.

The golden age of American pomology came to an abrupt end in the early 20th century. ... Large concerns in the West forced many smaller orchards in the East out of business. And when those quintessential mass-market apples, the patented and inoffensively sweet 'Red Delicious' and 'Golden Delicious', took hold in the early 1920s, many highly flavored heirlooms were effectively cut out of the commercial trade.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [A Curious Tale: The Apple in North America](#)**