

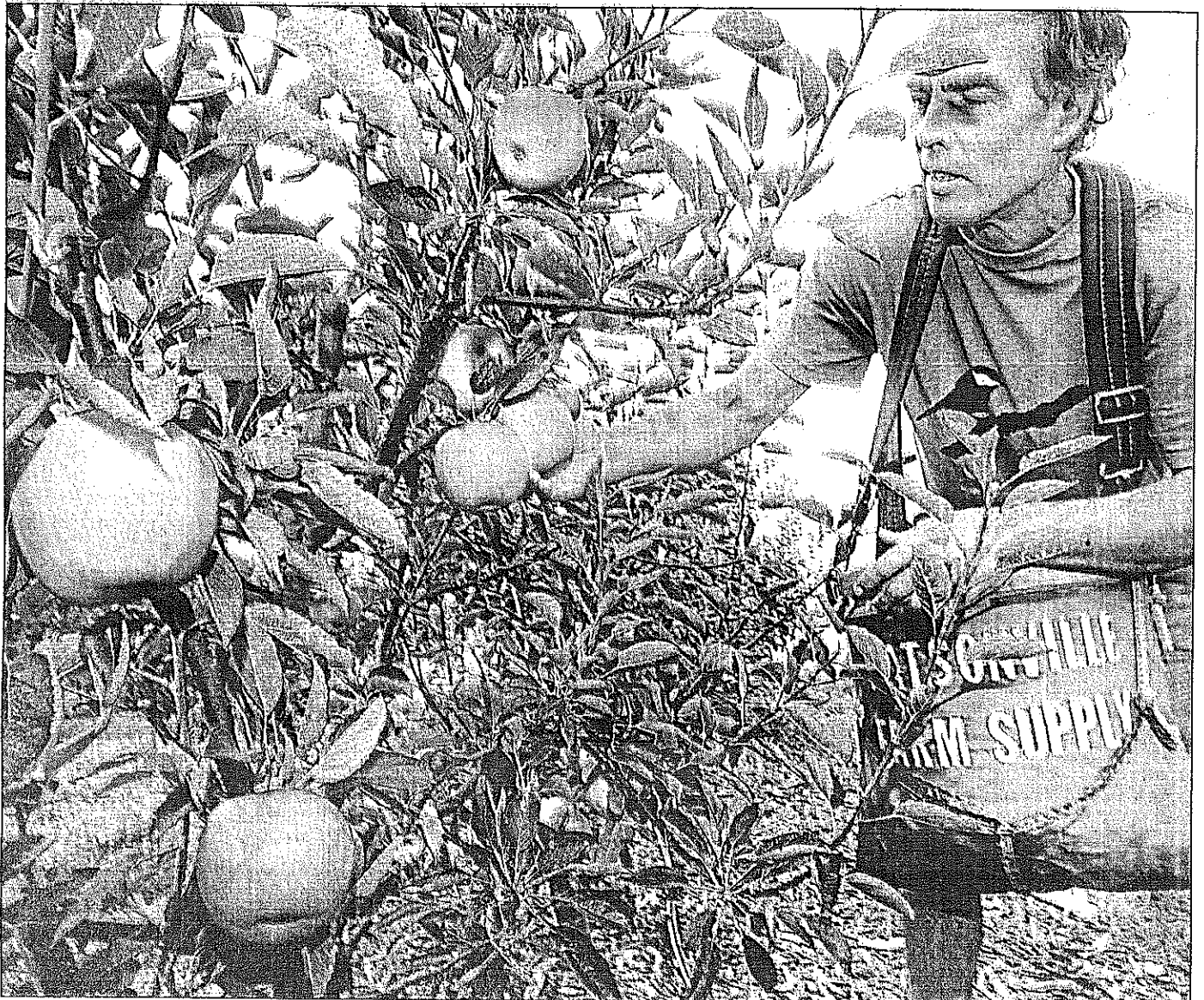
B1

HOME+GARDEN

Friday, October 16, 2015 » MORE AT [FACEBOOK.COM/SCSENTINEL](https://www.facebook.com/scsentinel) AND [TWITTER.COM/SCSENTINEL](https://twitter.com/scsentinel)

SE

APPLE TASTING



PHOTOS BY DAN COYRO — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

While this past winter's warm weather was bad for this fall's local apple crop, Freddy Menge's Brushy Mountain Limbertwig variety fared well, as it needs fewer "chill hours" than many other types. Menge's orchard off White Road has 70 varieties.

Apples need winter's bite

Visit Wilder Ranch on Saturday to taste varieties best suited to region's mild climate

By Emily Benson » ebenson@santacruzsentinel.com » [@erbenson1](https://twitter.com/erbenson1) on Twitter

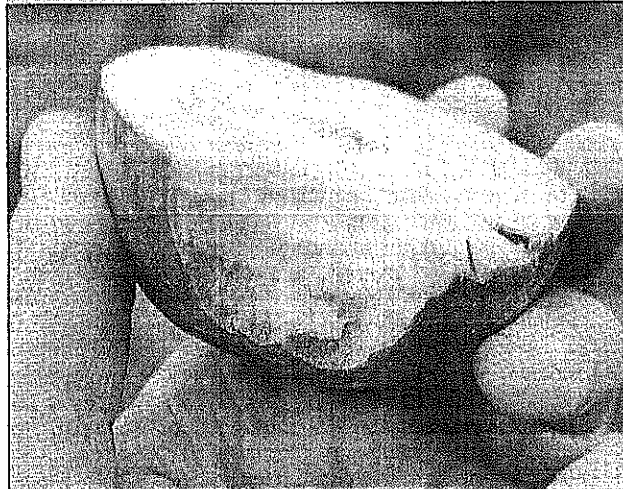
SANTA CRUZ » Last winter was temperate and sunny in Santa Cruz County, with some days in the mid-80s. In other words, it was horrible. According to the apple trees, that is.

Warm winter temperatures in recent years failed to give local trees the period of cool weather they need to bud and bear fruit. Apple harvests plummeted as a result. Some apple varieties, however, fared better than others.

The local chapter of the California Rare Fruit Growers group will host its annual apple tasting at the Heritage Harvest Festival on Saturday at Wilder Ranch State Park. The tasting will feature 50 to 70 varieties of locally grown apples. Fruit grower and organizer of the event Freddy Menge plans to highlight several apples that did well this year in spite of the warm winter, like the Brushy Mountain Limbertwig.

The Brushy Mountain Limbertwig appears well-suited to the

APPLES » PAGE 3



Freddy Menge's Pink Parfait apples have gorgeous pink flesh but are difficult to grow in Santa Cruz because of the warm winters.

IF YOU GO

APPLE TASTING AT HERITAGE HARVEST FESTIVAL

What: The Monterey Bay chapter of the California Rare Fruit Growers will have 50 to 70 varieties of locally grown apples on hand for visitors to sample. The tasting is part of the annual Heritage Harvest Festival, which will feature family-friendly activities including pumpkin decorating, draft horse wagon rides, historical demonstrations, square dancing and crafts. Visitors can also listen to live bluegrass and western music while sampling pumpkin ice cream, apple cider and fruit pies — in addition to the apples, of course.

When: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 17

Where: Wilder Ranch State Park, 1401 Coast Road, Santa Cruz

Admission: festival is free; \$5 for apple tasting; \$10 for parking

Information: www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=26413 or call 831-662-2216

Apples

FROM PAGE 1

shorter, milder winters that may become more common in the future, Menge said. And, he added, people like it.

"It beat out 70 other apples in our apple tasting last year," he said.

There are more than 8,000 types of apples worldwide, and researchers and hobbyists are developing new varieties every year, according to the UC Cooperative Extension. Because different apples have different growth requirements, some thrive in places where others fail to flourish or fruit.

If somebody tosses an apple core into a ditch and the seeds sprout, "some of them are going to die because the winters are too warm, or they're too cold, or it rains too much in the summer," explained Menge. The sprouts that grow into trees are the ones that are adapted to the surroundings in which they find themselves.

One of the ways apple types differ is in the amount of cool weather they require each year to reset their growth cycle. Without that "winter chill," the next year's fruit crop can be sporadic or even nonexistent.

"It's something that's variety specific with apples," said researcher and apple expert Kate Evans of Washington State University. Some apples require up to 1,000 hours of cool temperatures in the winter-time, while others, usually

varieties that originated in warm climates, need as little as 300 hours.

If apple trees don't get enough winter chill, it won't kill them, Evans said, but they won't produce any apples that year. Of course, she added, "Most people want to have a fruit tree for the fruit," so you should consider how much winter chill a particular apple variety requires before planting it in your backyard.

Sometimes trees will still bloom and produce fruit after a balmy winter, but the apples might not mature properly, according to commercial apple grower Jim Rider of Watsonville. Those abnormal apples, he said, usually aren't fit for anything but juice.

"The flowers didn't develop normally," Rider said of this year's apple crop, and as a result "a lot of the apples look like they have birth defects."

Apple growers in Santa Cruz County should consider shifting away from varieties that need a lot of chilly winter weather, said Menge. Trees that can handle warmer winters and still bear fruit might be a better choice.



Louie, the apple-loving neighbor dog on Nunes Road, sticks his nose through the fence to get a slice of Menge's Pink Parfait apple.

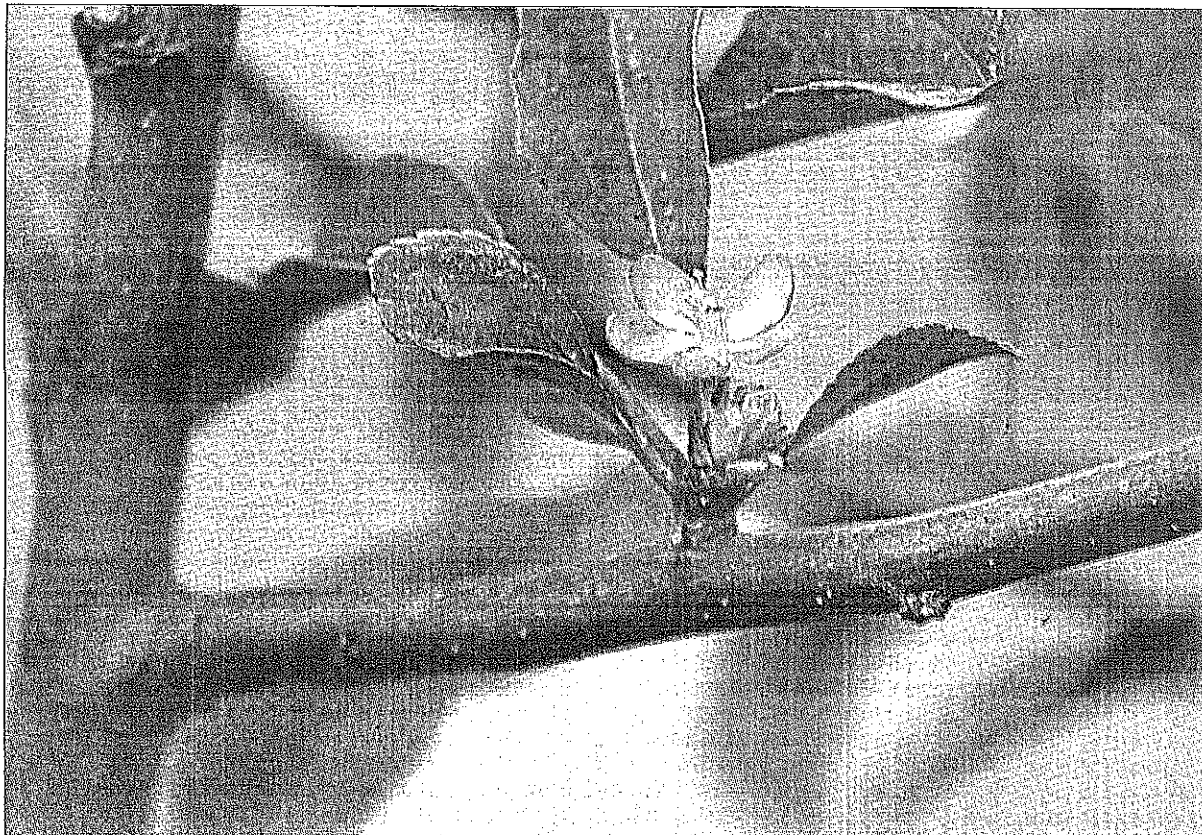
Menge hopes backyard orchardists will come to the apple tasting Saturday so they can sample some varieties that are suited to Santa Cruz County. He might sneak in a few unusual apples, he said, varieties that he developed from seed or found in abandoned orchards.

Weather forecasters are

predicting that the Santa Cruz area will experience strong El Niño conditions in the coming months. That could usher in the gloomy winter weather that apple trees need to produce a good fruit crop for next year.

"Let's all hope that we get rainfall," Rider said, "and not too much sunshine."

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2015



PHOTOS BY DAN COYRO — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Unusually warm weather this past year has Freddy Menge's pink-fleshed Grenadine apple trees blossoming in October.



Freddy Menge shows off his Lady Williams variety from Western Australia.

WHAT TO GROW

FREDDY MENGE'S TOP APPLE CHOICES FOR SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Waltana: Medium to large green fruit with red striping; crisp, firm and juicy

Golden Russet: Small to medium yellow fruit; sweet

Hauer Pippin: Large fruit; hard, juicy and tart

Lady Williams: Red fruit; sweet and sharp

Ashmead's Kernel: Small to medium yellow gold fruit; pear flavored and sweet

Pink Lady: Medium red fruit; smooth and sweet

So where does one get these apple varieties? Freddy Menge of the local chapter of the California Rare Fruit Growers group suggests visiting a local nursery to see what they offer, and he notes that nurseries will often special order requested varieties. And remember that bare-foot fruit trees arrive in area nurseries in January. That's when prices and selection are best.

Source: Apple picks from Freddy Menge, with descriptions from www.orangepippin.com