Apple Trees
(Malus sp.)

Description
(Virginia Tech, Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation)

Leaf: Alternate, simple, elliptical to ovate, 1 1/2 to 3 inches, pinnately veined, finely serrated, sometimes borne on spur shoots, green above and paler, white pubescent below and on the petiole.

Flower: Perfect, showy, may be white to red in color, with 5 petals for each flower; appear in the spring, usually in umbels.

Fruit: Pomes of various sizes and color (cultivar dependent) ranging from yellow to red when ripe in the fall.

Twig: Moderate in thickness, brown to gray, rapid growth usually gray hairy, generally many spur shoots; buds plump ovate, gray hairy.

Bark: Variable, generally smooth when young, later thin and scaly.

Form: Generally poor, with twisted trunks and low branching; spur shoots are prominent. When unpruned, numerous sucker shoots form along trunk and in crown.

Dichotomous Key
(Arbor Day Foundation: What Tree Is That?)

1. A. Does the tree have leaves that are flat and thin and generally shed annually? → Go to #2
   (These trees are called BROADLEAF, (a tree with leaves that are flat, thin and generally shed annually) most are DECIDUOUS (shedding all leaves annually) and bear a variety of fruit and flowers.)
   B. Does the tree have needle or scale-like leaves? → Not an apple tree

2. A. Are the leaves SIMPLE (one BLADE attached to a stalk or PETIOLE)? → Go to #3
   B. Are the leaves COMPOUND (more than one BLADE attached to a stalk or PETIOLE)? → Not an apple tree

3. A. Are the SIMPLE leaves ALTERNATE (leaves that are staggered, not opposite each other on the twig)? → Go to #4
   B. Are the SIMPLE leaves OPPOSITE (2 or 3 leaves that are directly across from each other on the same twig)? → Not an apple tree

4. A. Are the leaves generally more than 1" long? → Go to #5
   B. Are the leaves 1/3–1/2" long; the small, nut-like fruit has a long, hairy tip? → Not an apple tree

5. A. Are the leaves, when LOBED, PINNATELY (like vanes on a feather) or irregularly lobed? → Go to #6
   B. Are the leaves, when LOBED, PALMATELY lobed (like fingers on a hand)? → Not an apple tree

6. A. Are most of the leaves LOBED? → Go to #7
   B. Are the leaves, when LOBED, PALMATELY lobed (like fingers on a hand)? → Not an apple tree

7. A. Do the twigs NOT have slender, tapered thorns? → Go to #8
   B. Do the twigs have slender, tapered thorns? → Not an apple tree

8. A. Are the leaves downy and jagged-TOOTHED or slightly lobed; twigs with short SPURS; fruit a small apple or POME? → It's an apple tree!
   B. Are the leaves, twigs, and fruit not as above? → Not an apple tree