***An Apple For Every Taste***

*Is there any food more perfect for traveling than an apple? You can take it anywhere and without any fuss have a fresh treat. Apples travel so well we brought them across the country with us when we settled the West and planted them along the way. Most of the varieties we planted back then were for making cider and lost over the years as we developed newer varieties for fresh eating and cooking. Not long ago you typically could only find about half a dozen different varieties in most grocery stores, but now that is beginning to change as growers bring back some of the older varieties and consumers discover the amazing variety of different apples. In October Portland Nursery is the center of this gourmet lesson with its annual Apple Tasting. With over 60 varieties of apple and pears to sample, most for sale as well, it will give you an opportunity to discover the differences between them. There are antique varieties like Spitzenberg and Cox’s Orange Pippin, newer varieties like Honeycrisp and even some of our own crosses like Swiss Gourmet and Orondo Rose. But the fun doesn’t stop there - There is music, children’s activities, fresh pressed cider, our famous strudel, various vendors to tempt you and a hard cider tasting as well. Always the second and third weekends of October this year will be the 31st annual Gourmet Apple Tasting.*

*Apples are the most widely grown fruit tree and especially suited to our area. Most apple trees are grafted and their rootstock will determine how large that particular tree will grow. Many dwarf rootstocks are available for the home garden. Apple trees like fertile well drained soil, full sun and are best planted in the fall or early spring. When you choose your tree remember that most varieties need to be pollinated by another to fruit. If you only have room for one tree, look for one that has multiple varieties grafted onto the same tree. Apple trees also require regular pruning to keep them in shape and healthy. This is best done in late winter to early spring while the tree is dormant. There are many methods of pruning for apple trees and the experts at your local garden center can help you decide which is best for your growing situation. Although apple trees grow easily here, they can have insect or fungal problems. Codling Moth and Powdery Mildew are two of the more common problems in our area, but can be controlled with well timed dormant sprays containing a fungicide and horticultural oil. Always confirm the problem first before applying a control. With just a bit of attention to pruning and pollination you will be harvesting your own apples in no time. Apple trees live many years so it is important to pick out the right varieties for your family. Finding the right one can be easy and fun if you start with a visit to Apple Tasting!*