

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.





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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
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Simple Compound
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
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Alternate Opposite
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