

Handle apples like eggs

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With harvesting of Bramley's Seedling fruit now upon us, I have outlined some guidelines which should make picking easier for both picker and grower. In Autumn 2020 growers and pickers should undertake harvesting in line with Public Health Agency Covid-19 guidelines. Most fruit will be picked into picking bags which are more efficient and, if properly used will not bruise the fruit as much as buckets. All picking bags are adjustable in order to fit the build and strength of the picker. The picker is free to use both hands to pick and gently set the fruit in the bag. The picking bag when full, can be carefully drawn over the top of the apples in the bin, setting the picked fruit on top.

Always pick the same direction clockwise or anti-clockwise round the tree. With small trees, take all the fruit off as you around. In case of heavy cropping trees e.g. large Bramley's, which can yield up to 0.5 tonnes of fruit, it may be advisable to adopt the following procedure; pick a section of the lower tree canopy which can be easily reached from one point on the ground. Then pick same section of tree from a ladder. Continue round the tree picking from bottom to top in sections at a time.

Pick ropes of apples starting from the top of the rope, one at a time. Place the palm of the hand against eye of apple, or that part of it most exposed in a cluster. Lightly cup fingers around fruit. Using palm, push the fruit away from general direction of the stalk, with a rolling action, to break off the stalk of the bourge.

A slight twist of the hand may help. Use both hands alternately. Remember fruit is lifted off and not snatched or pulled off. The tips of your fingers and nails (which should be cut short) should not touch the fruit. All apples should be carefully set gently in the picking container. Do not drop the fruit or jostle the container. Fruit dropping more than 50mm (2 inches) will bruise as will fruit hitting other fruit, or hitting the side of the container.



Kieran Lavelle, Senior Horticulture Development Adviser, CAFRE using the picking bag to pick fruit on dwarfing rootstock Bramley's Seedling trees.

Handle apples like you would eggs. People with large hands and/or long fingers may eventually be able to remove two apples at a time per hand. This practise should not be encouraged until the picking of individual fruit bruise-free is mastered. Bruising does not show up immediately so check the bins the following morning to see if bruising can be found.

Growers should aim to grade their fruit at picking time by providing all pickers with grading rings of the required minimum and maximum size which can vary depending on the potential market outlet the fruit is destined for. Any fruit outside the required size range should be culled at harvest time.

Remember the golden rules - fruit is lifted off and not snatched or pulled off, apples should be set gently into the picking container. Do not drop the fruit or jostle the container. The picking bag when full, should be carefully drawn over the top of the apples in the bin. Treat apples like you would eggs.