

New Jersey/Massachusetts Apple Variety Trial Update

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We maintain apple variety blocks in both New Jersey and Massachusetts currently focusing on Midwest Apple Improvement Association (MAIA, <https://maiaapples.com>) new cultivars.

This report will focus most on the New Jersey trial, however, with observations from both MA and NJ.

In northern New Jersey we have a 350-tree test orchard with over 42 named and numbered selections planted to a tall spindle at 2.5 by 12 feet. Cultivar selections typically have 2-5 trees each. Trees are grown and maintained with NJ standard pest management protocols.

We have evaluated apple cultivars for the past 34 years, established a web site for cultivar evaluation at <http://appletesters.net/> currently with 1,315 individual apple variety evaluations. The significance of the project is that new cultivars that are marketable are essential to the viability of the modern orchard enterprise. Growers selecting their ‘next’ new variety they have success with is critical; every grower asks, “what is the best new variety?”

Most exciting is we continue to have new commercial releases from our evaluation blocks. Three new releases from the MAIA program are now available from select nurseries. They include:

MAIA-Mitchell (Figure 1) is a red limb sport of MAIA1 (EverCrisp®). Recently released, MAIA-Mitchell is an earlier coloring, vibrant red color alter-

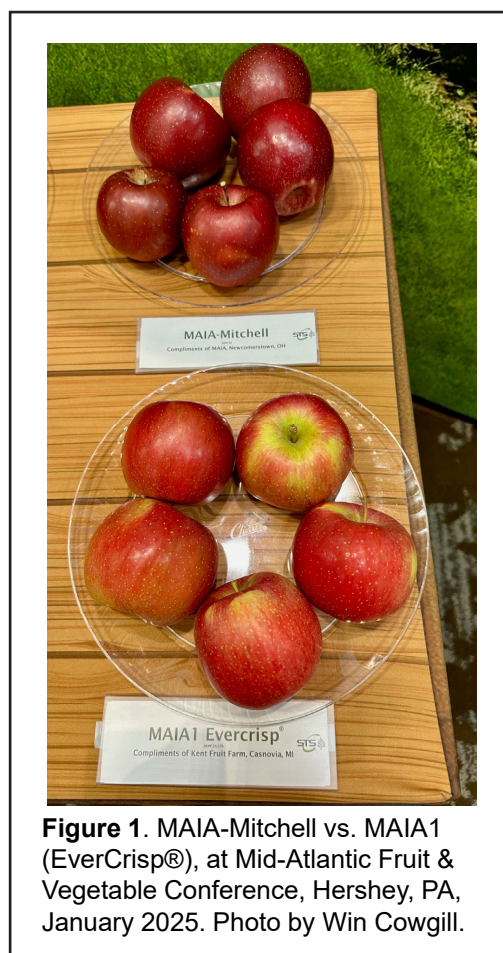


Figure 1. MAIA-Mitchell vs. MAIA1 (EverCrisp®), at Mid-Atlantic Fruit & Vegetable Conference, Hershey, PA, January 2025. Photo by Win Cowgill.

native to EverCrisp® which already has over 800,000 trees in the ground in the USA and has the potential to become a major variety in the USA. MAIA-Mitchell press release:

https://maiaapples.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MAIA_Spring_Newsletter_Digital-1-1.pdf

MAI-AM (USPP 36071, Figure 2) was tested as MDD-379, it is not trademark named yet but it is pending TM.

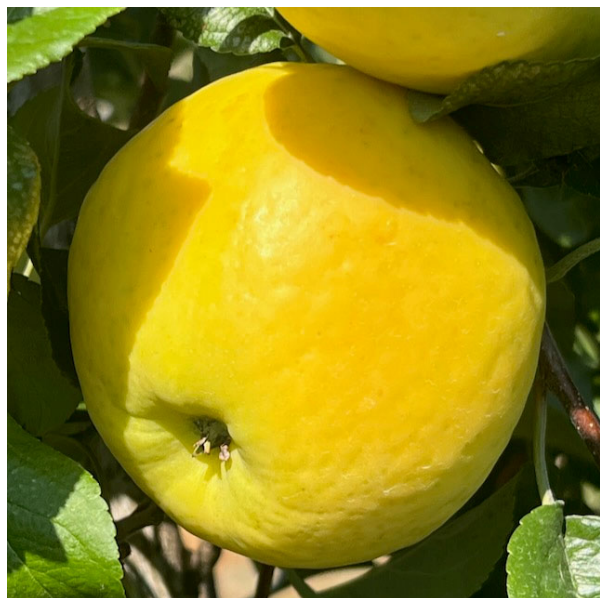


Figure 2. MAIA-AM at the UMass Orchard, Belchertown, MA, September 16, 2024. Photo by Jon Clements.

This is a crowd-pleasing crunchy yellow apple. It has been outstanding in NJ for the last four years, and has favored well in MA, NY and OH. The fruit harvests approximately one week after Gala and has a long harvest window of 3-4 weeks. It is crispy and juicy with a waxy-smooth, russet-free light-yellow skin. This selection jumped out at us the first time we observed and tasted it!

MAIA-Red Zeppelin (Figure 3) is a newly named MAIA apple, with attractive red skin (obviously!), tart-sweet flavor, modest size, and a good crunch. Although we have only seen it cropping for a year, it clearly deserves attention.



Figure 3. MAIA-Red Zeppelin at the UMass Orchard, Belchertown, MA, September 16, 2024. Photo by Jon Clements.

Literature Cited

Cowgill, Clements, 2019. [Suggested New Apple Variety: Crimson® Gold \(Svatava Cv.\)- Horticultural News, Volume 99, Winter, 2022](http://www.horticulturalnews.org/99-4/a4.pdf)
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