

The "True" Vandevere Apple

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One of the oldest known American apples, first mentioned in 1805 and long thot** to have been lost to cultivation, the true Vandevere, has now, it is believed, been rediscovered in central Indiana. Not the Vandevere of New York, or Newtown Spitzenberg, but the true Vandevere merits Downing's praise—"When in perfection, one of the most beautiful and finest apples"—and its virtual disappearance seems undeserved.

In the decade we have known it, we have come to esteem it highly and furthermore, have found a fair number of people who are eager to buy it. Elderly natives of this central Indiana area often gladly recall it from their youth, recognizing its distinctive flavor. Altho it is described as medium in size, in favorable years, 90 to 100 apples fill a bushel. It is marked with light red in indistinct streaks over a yellow background—well-colored specimens becoming deep red—and much spotted with russet. It has a short stem and closed calyx, as described by no old pomological writers. The individual apples color and ripen all thru October. During late hot spells they tend to drop badly, and I have found it necessary to pick them as they ripen. A few cling to the tree till mid-November, when they have passed their prime.

As Beech described it in *The Apples of New York* (1903)—"Flesh yellowish, crisp and tender with a rich, sprightly, mild sub-acid flavor," this is an apple which resists, indeed almost fights back, when bitten into. Well colored, fully ripe specimens are

extremely juicy, and for a few weeks seem almost unsurpassed in flavor. Altho it is definitely acid, it is also so sweet that it leaves a strong sugary aftertaste in the mouth, and its excellent cider is almost syrup. Cox, in *A View of the Cultivation of Fruit Trees* (1817), said that a pint of juice weighed "eleven pennyweights more than water." During October we consider it a very high quality dessert apple. Early in November, in mediocre storage, it has become greasy and lost its crispness and high dessert quality. It keeps quite well till April and is excellent for cooking till the end.

In the rich soil and fine growing conditions of central Indiana, the tree of Vandevere is large, spreading and productive. Our tree is about 60 years old, has an extreme spread of 45 feet, is about 30 feet tall, and 22 inches in diameter. It grows terminal shoots ten inches long, seems extremely vigorous, regularly bears thirty to forty bushels, and in 1965 bore seventy bushels of very large, fine fruit. Altho the wood seems strong and hard, the tree frequently loses limbs from the weight of the crop.

For those who like a hard, crisp, juicy, high flavored all-purpose apple, the Vandevere seems well suited to the home orchard because of its productivity, versatility and long ripening period. And since those who like it often like it extravagantly, it is just possible that it has limited commercial possibilities as well.

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**The editor has agreed to go along with the author's unorthodox spelling.