

## **Preserving Nantucket's Fruit Trees One Apple at a Time**

Apples have played an integral role in Massachusetts history since the 1600s. Hundreds of varieties were shipped from Europe and colonized all over New England. However, Massachusetts in particular adapted local favorites that were popularized for their pies, sauce, cider, vinegar, molasses, etc. These "heritage" apples come in thousands of varieties and were virtually wiped from cultivation with the introduction of industrial agriculture.

Nantucket itself had a deep heirloom apple history as well. According to "Town Farms & Country Commons, Farming on Nantucket" by Debra McManis, heritage apples and pears were a traditional part of any Nantucket homestead. In fact, Thomas Jefferson's grandmother herself planted an apple tree that is still alive today.

Although this fundamental piece of New England's history is fading, it is not lost. Heritage varieties are being preserved and propagated, and are even starting to make a resurgence in our culture. Evidence of this is the surging popularity of ciders-even Cisco brewers now serves a dry cider made from Massachusetts heritage apples. We think this growing interest could move to the trees themselves and all the other myriad ways to enjoy apples. We are taking steps toward preserving this piece of our history right in our backyard.

Jordan McHugh is partnering with the Nantucket Land Bank to create a heritage apple orchard on the Land Bank's Millbrook Road property. Our goal is for this orchard to allow everyone to enjoy the quintessential New England experience of apple picking while on Nantucket. Our hope is that this heritage orchard will not only serve as a place to pick, but also for people to come learn about historical apple varieties.