

## A Forgotten Fruit - Southern Apples Revisited

*by Ethan A. Natelson, M.D.*



*One of this area's true treasures, Dr. Ethan Natelson, left, will speak on growing apples in the Greater Houston area at the Gulf Coast Fruit Study Committee gathering Thursday, May 29, at the Harris County Agri-Life Extension office, 3033 Bear Creek Dr., in Bear Creek Park. 6:30sign-in, 7-8pm program. Right, an added bonus to joining the Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group is the wide variety of locally-grown fruit tastings at many of the meetings.*

The apple is not native to North America and is thought to have originated in Kazakhstan, from where it was brought to Europe and to England and then to the United States.

Most quality apples have a high winter chill requirement. In Houston, this is about 450 hours, although this past winter was unusual and we had about 700 hours. Apple rootstocks, like pears, are easy to graft for beginners, but most commercial apple rootstocks will not tolerate our soil diseases.



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However, the recent generation of Cornell-Geneva apple rootstocks, selected for specific disease resistance, should survive in Houston, and work within our low-chill parameters. I have one proven apple from Brazil, called **Malus 3**, which I have grown successfully on an early Cornell-Geneva experimental rootstock for 20 years.

Heidi Sheesley, at Treeseach Farms, is propagating Malus 3 as **Carnavale**. It is a heavy annual bearer of a large tart apple with a red blush and is self-fertile. **Mutsu (Crispin)** is a triploid apple, which fruits here, and this is a quality commercial apple. **Anna** with about a 250 chill hour requirement and **Dorsett Golden**, with about a 200 chill hour requirement, are widely in the trade.

A book on early heirloom apples grown in the South suggests Cauley, a seedling of the **White Spanish Reinette** apple introduced into Natchez in 1640, will work here.

I have perhaps the only surviving example of a limb sport of this tree named **Orange Cauley** somewhat smaller than its parent but with better external coloring and should be an ideal quality apple for us.

Three others are **Dixie Red Delight**, **Red Rebel**, and **Schell**, a medium sized yellow apple that has done well in Florida.