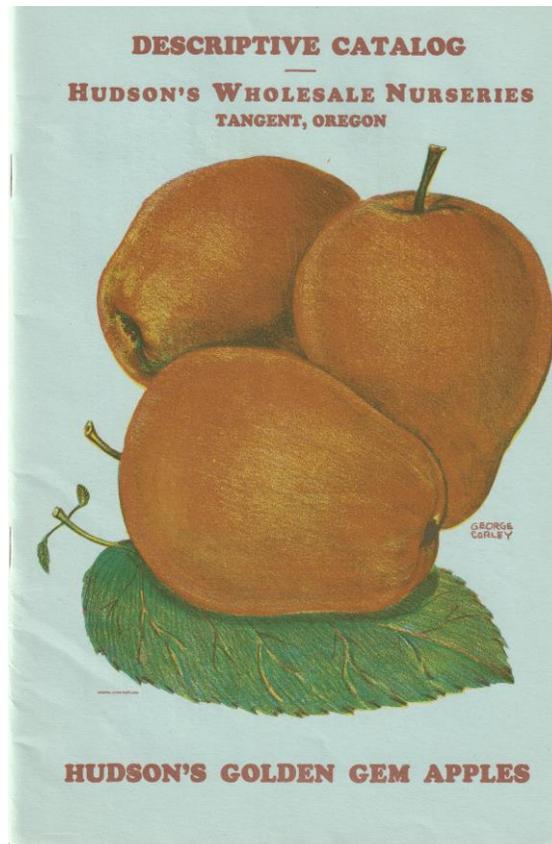




# Slow Food<sup>®</sup> Corvallis



## Hudson's Golden Gem Apple

Albert D. Hudson discovered this apple tree as a chance seedling in a fencerow at his nursery in Tangent, Oregon, in the 1920s. 'Hudson's Golden Gem' has won little interest from commercial growers, perhaps because its golden skin is entirely, though lightly, russeted. But the people who are lucky enough to grow this apple or to buy the fruits at a farmers' market or farmstand love the crisp, sweet, juicy flesh, with a flavor described by some as nutty as others as pear-like. Some fruit lovers, such as Lee Reich, find the apple's appearance beautiful--"but it's the flavor that puts it above the rest." A reviewer for Orange Pippin ([orangepippin.com](http://orangepippin.com)) said that the "pear-like taste comes

through after baking as well” and that the ‘Hudson’s Golden Gem’ is “one of the top candidates to bake in a strudel or similar pastry.”

A medium-large, usually conical apple that ripens in late October, ‘Hudson’s Golden Gem’ keeps well into the winter. The fruit looks rather like an upside-down Bosc pear. The tree bears reliably and prolifically every year and tolerates cold winters. Growers report that it is moderately resistant to scab and powdery mildew.

Beginning around the turn of the twentieth century, Albert Hudson sold thousands of fruit and nut trees, vines, roses, and evergreen shrubs every year from his nursery at the intersection of the Pacific Highway and the road to Corvallis. He top-grafted a scion of the apple seedling onto an established tree, and the grafted tree “developed into what we feel certain to be one of the most satisfactory and profitable varieties,” according to the nursery’s 1931 catalog. “Almost everybody seeing it for the first time exclaim, ‘What a beautiful pear!’ and if not apprised of the fact that it is an apple, will fail to notice that it is not a pear after eating same, for it is very fine grained, buttery, but more tart than a pear, and claimed by those to whom it has become acquainted to be of superior flavor of any apple ever eaten by them.” The catalog’s cover featured an artist’s rendition of three lovely ‘Hudson’s Golden Gem’ apples. Hudson limited sales of the variety to two per customer that year, at the high price of \$2.50 per tree (his other apple trees sold for 30 or 40 cents).

But apparently the new cultivar needed longer and stronger promotion than it received. Hudson’s interests were leading him away from fruit trees; in 1935 he retired from the nursery business to breed turkeys full time. In 1939 the Corvallis *Gazette-Times* described the ‘Hudson’s Golden Gem’ as one of various “orchard novelties” a local man was growing; apparently the apple wasn’t well known even in the Willamette Valley. The apple’s popularity began to bloom only in the last quarter of the twentieth century, when Home Orchard Society members shared its scions and Raintree and One Green World nurseries marketed the tree to backyard gardeners. In 1995, Warren Manhart, of Oregon, included it in his book *Apples for the Twenty-First Century*. Since then the apple has been featured in newspaper articles all over the country. In 2002, Renee and Joel Kiff, apple farmers in Alexander Valley, California, told the *Sonoma West Times and News* that “our most popular this year was Hudson’s Golden Gem—it’s very tasty, you just can’t describe how good it is.”

As such accolades continue and more nurseries stock the ‘Hudson’s Golden Gem,’ this apple may finally win the popularity it deserves.

*Photo and text by Linda Ziedrich*