



U-Pick Apple Orchard in Edwardsville Opens Season With COVID-19 Protections for Guests and Associates

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - Liberty Apple Orchard, a unique U-Pick orchard located at 8308 Kuhn Station Road in Edwardsville, just east of the city, opens on August 22, 2020, with COVID-19 safeguards in place.

Steve Miller, who owns and cares for the orchard with his wife, Lugene, said: “The health and safety of our guests and associates is foremost.

The orchard features 14 varieties of apples from August through November. Liberty Apple Orchard will be opened this season for U-pick guests on Saturday from 10:00 a. m. – 5:00 p.m., Sunday from 12:00 - 4:30 p.m. and after school Tuesday– Friday from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

On Labor Day, the orchard will be open from 10:00 – 5:00 p.m. Construction of a new farm market building is underway to provide more space for the social distancing of guests, especially during school field trips.

“The additional space will allow us to better serve our guests for years to come with pre-picked apples, cider, apple butter and apple sauce made from our apples, local honey, and baked goods,” said Lugene Miller. The COVID-19 shutdown this spring slowed the start of construction, but the Millers are hopeful the new building will be ready in September.

In response to COVID-19, a number of investments and process changes have been made to protect guests, including:

Employees will wear masks. And, gloves will be worn when handling money

Cleaning and disinfection practices will be expanded, including frequent employee hand washing, hand sanitizer for guests, and frequent disinfecting of surfaces, including bins, tables, and doorknobs

Non-porous plastic table cover has been installed in the schoolhouse

Contactless card readers have been purchased; use of cash will be discouraged

Curb-side service will be made available at the orchard

Tents will be set up to greet customers and provide for outdoor “shopping” & checkout

Guests who choose to enter the schoolhouse will be required to wear masks in accordance with Illinois guidelines

The number of people allowed in the schoolhouse at one time will be limited

Customers will be asked to leave the orchard if they are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or have come in contact with someone with symptoms

Associates will not work if they have symptoms

Signage to encourage six-foot social distancing will be installed

In accordance with Illinois Farmers' Market Association guidelines, apples at farmers' markets will be sold by the bag; customers will not handle the fruit.

Starting in late August, Gala, McIntosh and some Blondie apples will be the first of 14 varieties ready for picking. By early September, Jonathan, Empire, and Cortland apples will be available, followed by Liberty, Fuji, and Ultra Gold varieties. In October, Braeburn, Enterprise, Candycrisp, Gold Rush, and Granny Smith will be available for picking.

"Growing an orchard is a year-round endeavor, but we were fortunate again to have some dedicated high school and college students and retired folks to help out," said Steve Miller. The orchard employed 15 high school and college students over the past year to assist with pruning in the winter and orchard maintenance in the spring through fall seasons. "While some of our excellent employees are returning, others are starting college this year to pursue degrees in engineering, business, journalism, finance, and information systems. We are looking forward to their return during the winter break to assist with pruning," said Steve Miller. Liberty Apple Orchard is conveniently located near Edwardsville, Glen Carbon, Troy, and Highland, yet still situated in a rural setting.

"With over 1,000 large trees, the orchard provides plenty of room for social distancing and a healthy and happy outing for families," said Eugene Miller. "And there is no access fee to visit the orchard and enjoy the sights and fragrances of autumn," added Steve Miller. As in past years, the Millers' objectives are to provide high quality local fresh fruit, educational experience for children and families, and community participation and outreach. As part of this goal, Liberty Apple Orchard also offers opportunities for class or group field trips to pick apples and learn about growing an apple orchard (call ahead for arrangements: [618-659-9217](tel:618-659-9217)), fundraisers for your youth group, mission group, or school, and a source of healthy snacks for your fall festival/Halloween celebration.

In addition to providing a local "U-Pick" opportunity, Liberty Apple Orchard's produce is available at Dierberg's in Edwardsville, Local Harvest in Tower Grove, and, on Saturday mornings, at the Land of Goshen Farmers' Market in Edwardsville and the Tower Grove Farmers' Market.

Liberty Apple Orchard plans to expand its assistance to food banks in the Metro-East and St. Louis areas by partnering again with the St. Louis Area Foodbank, a non-profit food distribution organization serving 26 counties in Illinois and Missouri. Liberty

Apple Orchard is located just a few miles east of Edwardsville. From the Meyer YMCA in Edwardsville, go east on Goshen Road approximately two miles, turn right on Staunton Road, cross the Bike Trail, turn left on Kuhn Station Road. The orchard and schoolhouse are down the road about one-fourth of a mile on the right. From St. Louis via I-55, take exit 23, travel east on Route 143 for one-fourth mile, turn right on Staunton Rd. and proceed for about a mile.

At the “T” with Goshen Road turn left and then take the first right back onto Staunton Road. Cross the Bike Trail and turn left onto Kuhn Station Road. The orchard is down the road on the right. For further information on the ripening schedule and times and dates for special events, follow us on Facebook ([libertyappleorchard](#)), the website (www.libertyappleorchard.com), or call [\(618\) 659-9217](tel:6186599217).