Truman State student pursues interest and plants orchard

BY EMILY WICHMER
Staff Reporter

A Truman State student is willing to get her hands dirty when following her passion. Junior Calie Holden is planting an apple orchard at her father’s farm in Shannon County, Mo., this week, with the ultimate goal of transforming her apples into hard apple cider.

Holden said she hopes the trees will produce their first apples after two to four years. Holden said she became interested in growing an orchard during winter break, when she read a biology book, “Botany of Desire,” which detailed how plants and animals co-evolve. Holden said one chapter of the book was about apples, and the information was fascinating.

“I learned that when you plant a specific apple seed, you won’t necessarily get that kind of apple,” Holden said. “If you plant a Red Delicious, you won’t necessarily grow a Red Delicious apple tree. It’s like a lottery. You could get a completely different apple from that seed.”

Holden said that changed when farmers and scientists discovered grafting, a technique that fuses tissues from different trees, giving consistency in the apples produced. Because of the new-found technology, there are relatively few types of apples, she said. Next fall, Holden said she plans to make some test batches of hard cider with the first apples from the trees. She said she and her father discussed selling the cider commercially, but she would have to expand her orchard to do so. A gallon of cider requires 1.2 bushels, or several hundred pounds of apples, Holden said. She also would have to get the cider-making equipment inspected, she said.

“Right now, it’s just a hobby,” Holden said. “Maybe later it could be a business. As a history major, I might need a plan B for my life.”

With knowledge about the apple-growing process, Holden said she and her father ordered 50 apple trees to plant at his farm. While she is confident that with Calie’s expertise and their hard work, they can produce good cider, Holden said the growing process will require a few years of attention to the trees. She said they have to prune and spray the trees and maintain cages around them to keep animals and bugs away.

“The most exciting part of the project for Calvin is being able to work with his daughter,” he said. “I’m confident that we’re going to put out a great final product.”

Calie’s mother, Margaret Holden, said she thinks the project is ambitious, but she is confident Calie can do it.

“Calie has always liked to throw herself into a project,” Margaret said. “If she has an interest in something, she’ll research it and delve deeper. She’s the best person for the job.”

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Types of apples in hard cider

Apples produce juice that is neutral, aromatic, acidic, or bitter. There are multiple apple types to produce each kind of juice.

- **10%** acidic
- **10%** aromatic
- **75%** neutral base
- **5%** bitter

**Neutral**
- Baldwin
- Rambo
- Red Delicious
- Cortland

**Acidic**
- Siberian Crab
- Dolgo Crab
- Lindel

**Aromatic**
- Northern Spy
- Newtown
- Winesap

**Bitter**
- Arkansas Black
- Kingston Black
- Golden Russet
- Mcintosh

Amount of apple tree saplings purchased by Calie Holden for her orchard

- 17 Arkansas Black
- 17 Kingston Black
- 8 Golden Russet
- 7 Redstreak

*according to Holden