

U-Pick Apple Orchard in Edwardsville Opening for the Season With Covid-19 Protections for Guests and Associates

Liberty Apple Orchard, a U-pick orchard located just east of Edwardsville, will open on August 22, 2020 with Covid-19 safeguards in place. “The health and safety of our guests and associates is foremost,” said Steve Miller, who owns and cares for the orchard with his wife, Lugene Miller.

Located at 8308 Kuhn Station Road in Edwardsville, 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 10:00am – 5:00pm, Sunday from 12:00 - 4:30pm and after school Tuesday– Friday from 3:00 – 5:00pm. On Labor Day the orchard will be open from 10:00 – 5:00pm.

Construction of a new farm market building is underway to provide more space for social distancing for guests and 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 fruit.

Starting in late August, Gala, McIntosh and some Blondee 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 or 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,” added Steve Miller.

Liberty Apple Orchard is conveniently located near Edwardsville, Glen Carbon, Troy and Highland, yet still situated in a rural setting. “With over 1000 large trees, the orchard provides plenty of room for social distancing and a healthy and happy outing for families,” said Lugene 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, an 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), 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 Rd., cross the Bike Trail, turn left on Kuhn Station Rd. 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 Rd. turn left and then take the first right back onto Staunton Rd. Cross the Bike Trail and turn left onto Kuhn Station Rd. 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](https://www.facebook.com/libertyappleorchard)), our website (www.libertyappleorchard.com), or call (618) 659-9217.





