

The move to high density apple production systems has been the number one change in orchards in the last 25 years. It's proven to bring greater profitability and makes these orchards more sustainable, which is really what it's all about.

Apple orchards are expensive. Labor is a big issue, and mechanization is becoming more talked about. Even smaller orchards, which are common in Massachusetts, can benefit from the greater efficiency that mechanization and high density planting make possible.

These trees are planted closely together. And what they lack in height, they gain in beautiful, large, highly colored apples. The fruit is very high quality and more uniform than apples from traditional trees where they're covered by more foliage, take longer to grow, and don't color up as well.

In the traditional orchard, you see a lot of leaves. Whereas in the high density orchard, you see a lot of apples. And apples are what we're trying to grow, not trees.

In the high density orchard, the grower can get more fruit without more inputs like water or pesticides, and especially without a lot more labor. The inputs are less per unit of fruit production. In one of these newer style orchards, you can use a platform like this and really speed up the harvest. And it's safer for the pickers, because they're not up on ladders.

So, greater efficiency, more high quality fruit, and new technologies-- this is the future for the next generation of apple growers, here in Massachusetts and beyond. This is research that matters.