

***American Fruit Grower*[®] Magazine Announces 2023 Apple Grower of the Year**

North Carolina Industry Advocate Earns Prestigious Award

WILLOUGHBY, OH, USA (July 18, 2023) – Kenny Barnwell, an industry force in and out of his orchards in Edneyville, NC, has been named the 2023 *American Fruit Grower*SM Apple Grower of the Year. The award is presented by *American Fruit Grower*[®] magazine, published by Meister Media Worldwide.

Barnwell, 64, has spent much of the last 20-plus years advocating for the U.S. apple industry while tending to his 150-acre farm, Kenny Barnwell Orchards, outside Hendersonville in western North Carolina. Each year he drives several times to the state's capital, Raleigh, and at least once to Washington, DC, where he meets with legislators on Capitol Hill on behalf of his fellow apple growers.

"When I was in college, we had some truly outstanding agricultural leaders at that time. They went to the North Carolina Legislature, and they got earmarked money for apple research. We had that core group of leaders," Barnwell says. "Then we kind of went a generation without that. That's when I started to get involved."

Of particular interest to Barnwell are the issues of farmland preservation, apple importation, and immigration.

"We need to make sure we protect our farmland. We need to work on protecting specialty crops a little more than we're doing now," Barnwell says. "Two years ago we became a net importer of specialty crops for the first time in the history of the United States. Wouldn't you rather have something that is grown in the United States?"

USApple, the industry's top association, would certainly agree. Barnwell, who is featured on the cover of the August issue of *American Fruit Grower* magazine, will receive the Apple Grower of the Year Award at USApple's annual Apple Crop Outlook and Marketing Conference Aug. 17-18 in Chicago.

"Kenny deserves this recognition," Jim Bair, President and CEO of USApple, says. "We've watched him first-hand as he advocates for the national apple industry, from the Oval Office to the Secretary of Agriculture and members of Congress, down to his state and local officials. When we alert him to an issue, he immediately gets on the phone, and they take his calls because he's worked to build those relationships. That makes a difference for the industry. It's an honor for us at USApple to work alongside people like Kenny."

Sponsored by Valent USA, the Apple Grower of the Year Award honors individuals who influence the apple industry within the orchard and outside of it. Barnwell is the 35th recipient of the honor and second from North Carolina, following Hendersonville's Greg Nix in 2001.

"Who better to represent the apple industry as 2023 Apple Grower of the Year than Kenny Barnwell, who is doing the critical work necessary to ensure that U.S. apple production will continue for future generations," Vince Restucci, Tree Fruit Market Segment Manager at Valent USA, says. "We are incredibly proud that this year's winner is not only an extraordinary apple grower but also someone who represents the U.S. Apple Association's

| values by advocating for apple growers with public officials to raise awareness about the apple growing industry's issues and needs."

David Eddy, the Editor of *American Fruit Grower*, says producing quality fruit is only half the battle for Barnwell. He notes the first recipient of the award, John Rice of Rice Fruit Co., in Gardners, PA, was chosen in 1989 because of his work defending the industry from baseless accusations regarding a safe growth regulator, Alar.

"Mr. Barnwell goes to Washington because he knows that's where many of the key decisions affecting the industry are made," Eddy says. "That work, above and beyond apple production, benefits all growers and makes Kenny richly deserving of the award."

Advocating for apple growers — or even growing apples himself — has not always been Barnwell's calling. In fact, he graduated from Greensboro College in 1980 with a degree in chemistry.

"My grandparents on both sides grew apples, but my mother and father were educators. When I went to college, the last thing on my mind was becoming an apple grower," he says. "I came back and didn't really hunt for a job that hard. I started helping in the family business. My uncle had taken over what my grandfather had done, and I kind of grew into it."

In 1989 Barnwell assumed ownership of the family farm under the name Kenny Barnwell Orchards. Across 150 acres of apple trees, he has never stopped "changing and expanding and trying different things," he says. Outside those orchards, he has established himself as the grower with all the right connections.

About The Award: The *American Fruit Grower*SM Apple Grower of the Year Award is presented annually by *American Fruit Grower* and honors apple growers who have gone beyond the confines of the orchard and have, through their involvement and leadership, made a real impact on the apple industry. *American Fruit Grower* is published by Meister Media Worldwide.

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