

The Apple Tree *by Marilyn Reeves*

Well, hello there! Have you ever seen anything more beautiful than me? Come close and breathe in my lush aroma. Nothing says Springtime more eloquently than my lacy pink blossoms. I'm a member of the rose family – that's why my flowers smell so sweet.

Life hasn't always been easy. In order to survive the cold, I must sleep through the winter months. Some years there isn't enough water, and my leaves turn brown and I'll be sickly. But each spring I awaken to find myself a bit taller.

It's fun to tease people with the little red buds that start to form on the tips of my fingers. They wait and wait, hoping some mean old frost doesn't come along and nip them, like one did last year. But on a good year, those little red buds finally open and my beautiful blossoms burst forth in all their splendor. There are hundreds – maybe thousands – of them ... too numerous to count! I'm so lovely poets write poems about me. Artists try to paint my portrait. I cause young girls to swoon and young men to flirt, and old people to look at me longingly and remember the days of their youth.

One must enjoy my lovely blossoms while they last, because after a short time the breeze comes along and blows all my pretty petals away. But in their place, tiny apples begin to form, hidden amongst the green leaves of summer.

I am home to many creatures. Little gray spiders weave lacy curtains of silk between my branches. Birds build nests under my sheltering canopy to raise their young. I've witnessed many a fledgling try out its wings on its first flight to freedom from my loving arms.

Squirrels chase each other up, down, and all over me, and make homes in my trunk. It's funny to watch them hang upside-down, trying to get to those few remaining apples in the fall.

The apples are my pride and joy and my reason for being. They start out green and hard and have given many a too-eager child a tummy ache. But when they are allowed to ripen – all plump and red and juicy – they are glorious to see and delightful to taste. What could be more delicious than a nice crisp apple that pops when you bite into it? Or sliced up and covered with sugar and cinnamon and baked into a pie? I don't really mind if they're taken. That's what they're there for ... to be eaten and enjoyed by all.

In the autumn I put on my final, glorious display before going to sleep for the winter. The green of my leaves is replaced by shades of red and orange, magenta and bright yellow-gold. I'm really a show-off all year round. Joyce Kilmer said it best (and I'm paraphrasing here):

“I think that I shall never see a poem lovelier than me.”

Signed,

Your Friendly Neighborhood
Apple Tree