

## *Malus Sieversii*

*Malus Sieversii* is the world's original apple tree. According to the religious stories of Christianity, Islam and Judaism it grew in the Garden of Eden.

In fact, it comes from Kazakhstan where it still grows wild, although it is now in danger of extinction as more and more forests are cut down. It was only in 2010 that scientists found *Malus Sieversii* to be the original apple (the progenitor) from which all our domestic apples are descended.

Did you know that the former capital city of Kazakhstan was Almaty which means Father of Apples?



But there are two problems with this wild apple, for human beings. It can grow to almost 40 feet. That is the size of a three storey house. Can you imagine how difficult it will be to climb up to pick the apples on the top?

The second problem is that unlike us (and many other plants and animals), who are many ways like our mother and father, each wild apple tree produces very different fruits. Look at these – they are all the same apple tree.



So, over two thousand years ago, people began to develop the skills to join apple trees together. This is called grafting. This meant that they could control make the wild apple tree easier to harvest and . In Central Asia, they found some dwarf trees and they joined the roots of those trees to the wild apple to make it smaller. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, the Macedonian Emperor, Alexander the Great, sent samples of dwarf apple trees back to his teacher, the Greek Philosopher Aristotle.

At the same time, people began joining or grafting different types of apple trees together. In this way, they developed trees that tasted lovely, looked nice and were small and easy to harvest.

As the wild apples were domesticated and bred, they gradually spread westwards down the Silk Road, the great trading highway for camel caravans which linked Asia to the Middle East and ultimately Europe. Look for *Cour Pendu Plat* to see the first apple that the Romans brought to Britain.