Apple trees originated in central Asia; they were brought to North America by European settlers in the 1600s. These fruits thrive in temperate climates because they need a period of cold and dormancy in order to prosper; therefore, they are not cultivated in tropical climates. Apples are in the Rosaceae (rose) family, along with almonds, cherries, peaches, pears, plums, raspberries, and strawberries.