

ALASKA NAFEX NEWSLETTER

A PUBLICATION OF THE ALASKA CHAPTER, NORTH AMERICAN FRUIT EXPLORERS (NAFEX)

President: **Erik Simpson** 7225 Blackberry St. Anchorage, AK 99502 248-9701(w);
243-3058(h)

Vice-President: **River Bean** SRD Box 9043 Palmer, AK 99645 746-1087(h)

Secretary: **Dell Kuk** 4021 E. 65th Ave. Anchorage, AK 99507 344-5489(h)

Treasurer: **George Stevens** P.O. Box 103421 Anchorage, AK 99510 276-6137

Editor: **Pat Holloway** 1170 Gilmore Trail Fairbanks, AK 99712 474-7433(w)

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MEETING DATES

JAN 18 Thurs. 7 p.m. National Bank of Alaska lunchroom*, 2nd floor, Main headquarters, Northern Lights and C Street. Speaker: Wayne Vandre, Coop. Extension Service- Greenhouses, cold frames and solar additions.

Mr. Vandre is well-known for his expertise in greenhouse development and through his annual updates on the topic to the Alaska Master Gardeners. Slides will be shown and the club plans to distribute practical "how to" material from recent magazines. Brief hints gathered from local real estate appraiser on "how to" make the greenhouse/cold frame additions a value-added attraction will be offered.

Feb. 8 Second Thurs. Update on apples. NBA lunch room, 7 p.m.

Mar. 8 Preparations for spring. NBA lunchroom, 7 p.m.

April Tree grafting party. Time and place TBA

May Feeding, watering and soil testing for different fruit crops. Time/place TBA

June Seedling/rooted cutting exchange

September Seed gathering/ winter preparations

October Fruit tasting

*A new policy on reserving the NBA lunchroom makes it difficult to assure that club meetings can be held at the established date of the second Thursday. Efforts will be made to secure the meeting place at that time, but occasionally either the meeting place or date may have to be varied. Call a NAFEX Alaska Chapter officer or member if you miss your monthly newsletter and need to confirm the meeting place or date.

NOVEMBER MEETING

Wide-ranging advice on pomology and practical tips on edible landscaping were topics of feature speaker Wayne Leiser at the November meeting in Anchorage. Leiser is well-known in the area as a greenhouse manager, newspaper gardening columnist and graduate horticulturist.

In a question and answer session, about 20 local NAFEX members heard Leiser's advice on protecting apples from natural predators. To protect from small children, grow trees behind a fence, and preferably in the back yard. To protect from moose, tie cloth bags of Irish Spring soap onto the tree branches.

When planting tree or bush fruits, remember that roots grow more horizontally in Alaska than elsewhere, so concentrate on digging a larger diameter hole rather than a deeper hole. Our Class II soils can be improved by adding Sphagnum peat moss in equal proportions with native soil.

For plant food, use the higher phosphorus content products in 8-32-16 or 10-20-10 proportions. Avoid too much nitrogen. This promotes wil- lowy, weak growth and retards blooming. Phosphorus is the element most desired. It helps establish a good root system

and promotes blooming. Potash (the last of the N-P-K trilogy) aids disease resistance and acts as a balancing agent. Trace elements necessary for growth and production are probably available naturally in the soil.

A higher nitrogen food can be used in early spring for those who want to boost growth. Then, switch to the high phosphorus product.

Regard your plants as living beings and because of lengthy daylight conditions in Alaska summers, give them lighter, more frequent feedings than most Outsiders recommend. Feeding in late fall is all right, if not using a high nitrogen fertilizer.

Most fruits prefer a neutral soil pH of 6.5 to 7. Blueberries are an exception since they like acidity.

If selecting trees for edible landscaping, 'Yellow Transparent' apples are among the more productive varieties in Anchorage. Otherwise, choose summer apples by Outside standards. These are usually self pollinating. 'Northstar' and 'Meteor' cherries are the best varieties for Anchorage. NAFEX member Lawrence Clark has a manchurian apricot. 'Summer-crisp' pears are becoming popular as a variety for northern gardens.

Frequently overlooked as landscape bush fruits are the

Buffaloberry and serviceberry. Both are attractive plants.

If collecting seeds, rootstocks, or scionwood, the collection area may be more important than the variety. Collection from northern areas is recommended. However, Leiser says that one original Anchorage townsite lot has a producing sweet cherry tree that is 25 years old. It is an unknown variety that was bought from Sears. Moral: in northern pomology, there are no hard and fast rules. Fortuitous growing weather in the early years of plant life can sometimes produce surprising results.

There are a few textbooks for cold climate gardening. Sunset Western Garden Book is one useful book for Alaskans, and some NAFEX members recommend North Country Gardening by Lewis Hill from Garden Way Publ.

UPDATE ON THE GRAFTERS HANDBOOK

NAFEX member, John Leipzig of Fairbanks informed the editor that both the older edition and an updated edition of The Grafters Handbook are available from two different publishers. You can purchase either as special orders from your local bookstore.

SURVIVAL OF MY FRUIT TREES FOLLOWING THE SEVERE WINTER OF 88-89

The coldest temperature that I recorded at my home on Esro Road north of Fairbanks was -53 F. I should also point out that we live at the 1000 ft level. We had good apples and crabs from 'Heyer 12', 'Parkland', 'Dolgo', 'Kerr', 'Norland', 'Noret' and 'Rescue'. We had enough cherries to make a cherry pie (ground cherry) and sand and nanking cherries to eat out of hand. The Manchurian and American plum bushes had some blossoms but did not set fruit. My 'Compass' cherry plum also had blossoms but no fruit.

Below is a rating of winter injury on my cultivars using the following scale:

NONE-10%-20%-30%-40%-50%-
60%-70%-80%-90%-DEAD
Apples/crabs: 'Adanac' 50%,
'Anoka' dead, 'Beacon' 99%,
'Caroll' 80%, 'Chesnut' 99%,
'Crimson Beauty' dead, 'Doigo'
none, 'Duchess' 50%, 'Early
Blaze' Seedling 40%, 'Early
Cortland' dead, 'Early Harvest'
50%, 'Geneva Early' 50%,
'Goodland' 90%, 'Haralred' 99%,
'Haralson' dead, 'Heyer 12' 10%,
'Iowa Beauty' 99%, 'JerseyMac'
dead, 'Kerr' 3%, 'Livland
Raspberry' 70%, 'Lodi' dead,
'Luke' dead, 'Mantet' dead, N.Y.
651 dead, N.Y. 652 dead, 'Noran'
20%, 'Norcue' 15%, 'Norda' 2%.

'Noret' 1%, 'Norhey' 5%, 'Norson' 10%, 'Norland' 15%, 'Oriole' 99%, 'Parkland' 20%, 'Red Duchess' dead, 'Red Astrachan' dead, 'Rescue' none, 'State Fair' dead, 'Sweet 16' dead, 'Tetovsky' 20%, 'Trail' 30%, 'Tydeman' dead, 'Wealthy' dead, and 'Wien' none.

Prunus varieties and misc: buffaloberry none, 'Compass' cherry plum 40%, 'Spatula' cherry plum 90%, 'Red Diamond' cherry plum dead, edible honeysuckle none, 'Pixwell' gooseberry dead, ground cherry Scarlet strain none, ground cherry none, nanking cherry 2%, sand cherry 15%, 'Harrow Delight' pear dead, 'Harvest Queen' pear dead, 'Hudar' pear dead, 'Stacey' pear dead, 'La Crescent' plum dead, 'Underwood' plum dead, manchurian plum none, Americana plum none, 'Montmorency' cherry dead, 'Meteor' cherry dead, Manchurian apricot none, 'Montrose' apricot 90%, 'North Star' cherry 30%

-Clair Lammers

SEED ORDERING TIME FOR COOL TOMATOES

Botanically speaking the tomato is a fruit. So to relieve the suspenseful worry about how their fruit trees and berries survived the winter, Alaska members of NAFEX start the growing season before snowmelt by starting their annual tomato crops.

Many commercial greenhouses and garden supply stores in Alaska are offering seeds from tomato varieties that can be grown outdoors in most parts of the State. It is now time to order or buy your seed if you failed to save seed from your most tasty varieties last season.

For the beginner, an extremely hardy variety is the Siberia tomato. It has an interesting history-- with political overtones. This heritage tomato and other hardy seeds can be ordered from Ron and Cynthia Driskell Box 300, Olds, Alberta, Canada TOM 1PO (Ph: 403-556-7333)

-Ruth Edmondson

Hardy varieties of indeterminate tomatoes are also available through the Denali Seed Co. (Reg Yapple) 12101 Division, Anchorage, AK and at most local nurseries. My favorites are 'Subarctic '25', 'Subarctic Maxie' and the Siberian tomato.

-Erik Simpson

DON'T FORGET - PAY YOUR 1990 DUES OF \$7.00 TODAY!