

# ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS' NEWSLETTER

Summer 1995

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President and Editor: **Dwight Bradley**, 22008 Voyles Blvd., Chugiak, AK 99567. Phone 688-1268.  
Vice President: **Bob Boyer**, P.O. Box 9-1376, Anchorage, AK 99509. Phone 561-2885  
Secretary and Treasurer: **Pam Neiswanger Warner**, 7000 Viburnum Dr., Anchorage, AK 99507. Phone 344-9749.  
Board Member at Large: **Eric Simpson**, 162 Creckside Dr., Sequim, WA 98382

## ANNUAL APPLE TASTING, SEPT. 28

Our next meeting will be the annual tasting of Alaska-grown apples, on Thursday, September 28, at 6:30 P.M. This is one week later than normal, to allow for some of the later-ripening varieties enough time to get edible. Lauren and I will host the tasting again at the Bradley homestead in Peters Creek. The tasting will start promptly at 6:30 PM, but if you are bringing apples, please try to arrive a little early so that we can be prepared to start on time (there's a fair amount of slicing when three dozen varieties are waiting to be tasted). Pies, jellies, applesauce will be welcomed, as always, and this year we will sample them before the apples. We'll also have an apple grinder and cider press set up to squeeze any surplus apples that people might wish to bring.

This is our best opportunity for publicity — so please feel free to bring any friends who might be interested in what we do.

**Directions:** From Anchorage, take the Glenn Highway to the Peters Creek exit, which is about 1 mile past the North Birchwood exit. Turn left at the end of the ramp onto Voyles Blvd. (no street sign), go straight at the four-way stop, and drive about 0.7 miles to a T intersection, at the bottom of the hill. Where the paved roads go left or right, our driveway is straight across, past a chain link fence. There's plenty of parking inside the fence. Children are very welcome. From Palmer, the exit is marked South Peters Creek, about a mile past the North Peters Creek exit. Turn right at the end of the ramp, then follow directions as for Anchorage. Telephone 688-1268 (evenings) for more information.

## APPLE EXHIBITS AT THE ALASKA STATE FAIR

At the Alaska State Fair in Palmer, First Premium for apples went to Casey Jones of Palmer for a small, non-russeted yellow apple labelled "Golden Delicious". This was probably misnamed, since Golden Delicious would probably not even survive in south-central Alaska, let alone ripen prize-

winning fruit. Second prize went to Phyllis Kircher for Norland; Honorable mention went to Walter Williams for Northland? This Northland looked identical to one exhibited by Jay Dearborn.

Although these were the official prizewinners, the best looking apples were part of a nice display by Jay Dearborn of Yellow Jay, Rescue, Chinese Golden Early, Vista Bella, Parkland, Quality Crab, Geneva Early, Summerred, Northland, Canada Red, Norda, and Westland.

## SUMMER ORCHARD REPORT

-by *Dwight Bradley*

After the rough 1995 winter which killed 20 of our 50 apple trees and set back quite a few more, the summer of 1995 was a great growing season. Most of the trees that survived the winter, and all of the new whips that went into replace the lost trees, put on two feet of strong growth. Even varieties that had struggled in past years shot up. For example, a State Fair on Antonovka rootstock, which was planted as a whip in 1988, had never managed more than 3-6 inches of weak growth before this summer. This year, about ten branches grew 2 feet or more. One possible cause is the ample summer rainfall, which contrasted so strongly with the previous dry summers. Another possibility is that I inoculated every tree in the orchard with a dose of beneficial mycohrizae in early May. As we've heard many times from Dana Olsen, the mycohrizae enter into a symbiotic relationship with a tree's roots, and make certain nutrients more available than otherwise.

Varieties that fruited: Norland (2 trees), Parkland, Rescue, Yellow Transparent, Morden 359, Heyer 20, Crimson Beauty, Yellow Jay, Oriole, and Goodland. Four others bloomed but did not set fruit: Minnesota 1734, Chinese Golden Early, Rosthern 18, and Almata,

## CRIMSON BEAUTY APPLE

-by *Dwight Bradley*

The Crimson Beauty, or Scarlet Pippin, is an antique, early-ripening, red apple variety. Although still not widely grown in Alaska, it

shows considerable promise. According to Beach (1905, Apples of New York, v. 2, p. 196-197), it originated about 1860 in Lynn, Ontario. Harold Jones, an Ontario agricultural researcher, is credited with having brought the variety to general notice.

The apple resembles Fameuse and Macintosh. Beach did not report on its parentage, but it seems likely that it was a Fameuse seedling, as this variety was widely planted in Upper Canada in the 1700's and 1800's, whereas McIntosh was not even propagated until 1870. As described by Beach, the red fruit is medium size, very attractive, and round to slightly oblate. The flesh is white, firm, crisp, mild subacid with a pleasant but not high flavor, and very good (This was before grade inflation — Beach rated only a very few apples higher than very good).

In our Peters Creek orchard, we have one Crimson Beauty tree that we planted in 1992 as a one-year whip. It bore its first crop of three or four apples in 1994, and its second crop of the same size this year. In 1994, the fruit ripened around the middle of September (about the same time as Yellow Transparent), and would have rated at least 9 on a scale 10. The 1995 crop, unfortunately, was pecked off the tree around the end of August by magpies.

The tree seems well suited to Alaskan conditions. According to Stilphen (1993, Apples of Maine, p. 83-84), it was widely grown in Aroostook County, northernmost Maine (Zones 2 and 3) a century ago. (In the late 1800's, northernmost Maine and Minnesota were still the proving grounds in the U.S. for hardy fruit trees.) St. Lawrence Nurseries rates it as hardy to Zone 1 or 2. It has suffered little or no winterkill in three winters at Peters Creek. It also has the advantage of shutting down early, shedding its leaves just after Rescue and Chinese Golden Early. This makes it less prone to breakage during the first ice- and snowstorms in the fall.

I would be interested in hearing from other Alaskan growers about any experiences with Crimson Beauty. From what I've seen so far, it is a variety worthy of more testing. I grafted three more trees in 1995, which will be going into the ground in 1996. Ample scionwood will be available in the Spring of 1996.

### **KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR SPORTS**

*-by Dwight Bradley*

For those who have producing apple trees, this is a good time of year to watch for particularly desirable branches for propagation. Whereas new

apple varieties result from seedlings, many improved strains of existing varieties have come from observant growers who notice something different on one branch of a tree. For example, redder fruit, larger fruit, pronounced calyx lobes, abundant spurs, and so on.

Although there are no large-scale apple breeding efforts in Alaska, bud sports are one potential way to quickly improve our lot as apple growers. So keep an eye out for branches with particularly larger Norlands, Parklands, Rescues, and so on. Flag them now to be cut for scionwood next spring.

### **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON CHINESE GOLDEN EARLY**

*-by Dwight Bradley*

In the most recent edition (#20) of *Apple Notes — A Prairie Pomologist's Letter Exchange*, editor Roger Vick has asked for information about the Chinese Golden Early apple. This short note is in response to his request. In the 1994 Census of Alaskan Apple Trees, Chinese Golden Early was one of the more popular varieties in the state, ranking fourth in terms of number of trees in the ground ((33 trees). These rankings are based solely on census forms I received; I've run across at least another half-dozen well established Chinese Golden Early trees around Anchorage.

We have two Chinese Golden Early trees, one topworked in 1991 and the other planted as a whip in 1992. Both bore their first fruit in 1994. The tree is hardy and vigorous, and appears to have only one serious flaw, a tendency toward an upright growth habit with too many narrow-croched branches. This would seem to make it less promising than, say, Rescue, as a framework for topworking using Bernie Nikolai's technique (see APFGA Newsletter, v. 9, no. 4, Winter 94-95).

The fruit itself is not too sensational. It is small, roundish, yellow. At its best, it is fairly good eating (a nice, relatively crisp blend of sweet and tart); at its worst — and more commonly — it is mushy and bland. The quality and texture are uneven and unpredictable from one apple to the next. It ripens very early, a few days before Yellow Transparent, and hence might have a niche in parts of Alaska where the growing season is exceptionally short and better varieties won't ripen or survive. It is a terrible keeper, bruising within minutes of picking from routine handling. It only takes a few days for a box of Chinese Golden Early fruit to turn completely mushy and brown from all the little bruises. The fruit has a tendency to watercore (these translucent fruits are popular

with kids). It makes good sauce and a surprisingly good single-variety sweet cider.

I don't know much about the origin of Chinese Golden Early, and if anyone can add to the following I would like to hear from them. The only trees I know about are in Alaska. The oldest were planted by the Dearborns in Palmer in the 1960's. There may be others of about the same vintage in Anchorage. I have never run across it in catalogs such as Bear Creek, St. Lawrence, etc., who cater to northern growers. Where did the first Chinese Golden Early trees that came to Alaska come from?

Chinese Golden Early appears to be one parent of the wonderful-tasting Yellow Jay apple, a seedling grown by the late Curtis Dearborn of Palmer, Alaska. The parents of Yellow Jay were two of the following: Rescue, Summerred, and Chinese Golden Early. From its appearance, Chinese Golden Early seems likely to be one of the parents.

In my opinion, Chinese Golden Early is far inferior to such apples as Norland, Parkland, and even Rescue. I would put it in a class with Heyer 12: a time-tested variety that is a reliable cropper in south-central Alaska, and that yields fruit most suitable for cooking. The fruit is a little better than Heyer 12, but smaller, and the tree is probably a little less hardy.

## REPORT ON KILLARNEY AND CANBY RASPBERRIES

-by Dwight Bradley

Over the past three summers, we've had two 50-foot rows of Killarney Raspberry come into full production. Killarney is a red, summer-bearing raspberry developed in 1961 at the Morden Experiment Station in Manitoba. We chose Killarney from the North Star Gardens catalog (raspberry specialists: 91098 - 60th St., Decatur, MI 49045) because it seemed to offer the best combination of hardiness, berry quality, berry size, and yield.

In my opinion, Killarney has turned out to be only a mediocre variety for south-central Alaska. Its main advantages are the length of season and prolific growth. The berries begin to ripen in early August, and the height of the season is the last two weeks of August, but many good-sized berries continue to ripen up to the killing freeze. The berries are large but not giant. There is some minor dieback due to winterkill. Yields are impressive.

The main disadvantage of Killarney is the fairly bland flavor. At the height of the season, berries that are in full sun are quite good, but are not highly flavored. Toward the end of the season, the berries get blander and blander. One cause is that by mid-September, incredibly lush primocane growth blocks most of the sun that might reach the late berries. This could be remedied by pruning out the weakest new canes in late August. These need to go anyway, eventually, but pruning sooner rather than later might improve the late crop.

Our 50-foot row of Canby raspberries also matured this summer. Canby originated in 1953 in Corvallis, Oregon, and is notable for its thornless canes. It is truly a pleasure to pick, and to prune. The flavor is noticeably better (more intense) than the bland Killarney. The Canbys still aren't as well established as the Killarneys, so it is too early to accurately compare yields, but I suspect that Canby will have slightly lower yields. Some of our Canby canes are now 8 feet high, in mid-September.

### SHAPES

#### FRUIT



Round



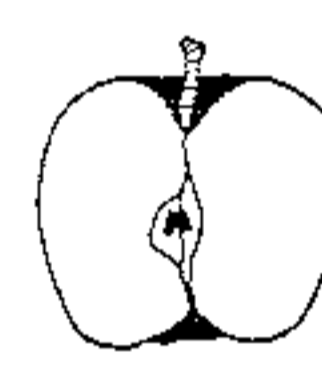
Conic



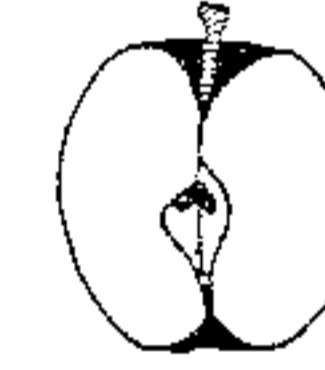
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Oblong



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Ovate



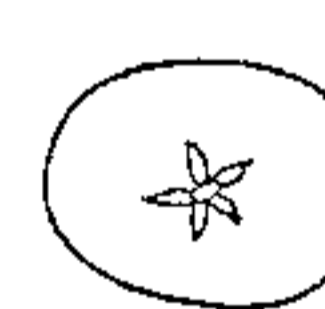
Lopsided



Oblique



Regular



Elliptical



Angular



Ribbed

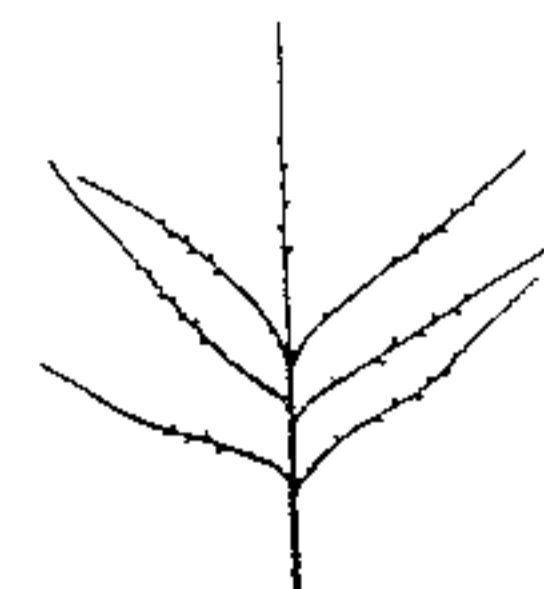
#### TREES



Upright



Open



Spreading

(From Burford Brothers Catalog, Monroe, VA with permission.)