

# ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS NEWSLETTER

Spring 1997

Volume 12, Number 1

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 Creekside Dr., Sequim, WA 98382

## MARCH MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The March meeting will be held at the regular time and date, Thursday, March 20, 1997, 7 PM.

However, the usual meeting place at Boyer Photography won't be available, so for this month only we'll meet at Bradley's, 22008 Voyles Blvd., in Chugiak (688-1268). Directions: take the Glenn Highway to the South Peters Creek exit (one of two exits for Peters Creek, the one closer to Anchorage). At the end of the ramp turn north (left if coming from Anchorage) and go a few hundred feet to a 4-way stop. Go straight, on Voyles Blvd., about 0.6 miles. Voyles ends at a "T" at the bottom of a fairly steep hill. Our driveway is straight across. You go through a chain-link gate and then you'll see our log cabin. On the agenda:

- A new apple-growing video from Bob Boyer.
- Setting a new day for monthly meetings.
- Final plans for grafting workshop. Come with your lists of scionwood you would like or will be bringing. I have lists from Joe Orsi and Bob Purvis with lots of interesting, hard-to-find varieties. Bob Boyer has ordered a bunch of wood from various commercial sources.
- Possible display for Anchorage Garden Show in late April.

## APRIL 8 TALK ON APPLE GROWING IN ALASKA

I'll be giving a talk at the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service, corner of Northern Lights and Lake Otis, on April 8, from 7:00 to 8:30 PM. Topics will include the basics of apple growing, a slide tour of Alaska apple orchards and varieties, and a grafting demonstration. For confirmation, or additional information, call me at 688-1268.

- Dwight Bradley

## APRIL 12 GRAFTING WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

The annual grafting workshop will be held on April 12, 1-4 PM, at Dimond Greenhouses, Anchorage, courtesy of Wayne Leiser. Ranetka rootstocks and scionwood that we obtained commercially will be available at cost, still to be determined.

As in past years, if you need lots of rootstock or lots of scionwood, you'll need to have made arrangements with Bob Boyer well in advance.

The grafting workshop will be held in place of the regular April meeting. There will be no other meeting in April.

UNLESS SOMETHING CHANGES, THIS WILL BE YOUR ONLY NOTIFICATION ABOUT THE GRAFTING WORKSHOP, SO PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR.

## APRIL 7 GRAFTING CLASS

I'll be teaching an evening class in apple grafting for the Anchorage Community schools on April 7 at 7:00 PM. Location: Chugiak Elementary (just east of the interchange between the Glenn highway and North Birchwood). The cost is \$10 which includes 1 rootstock and a length of Norland or Parkland scionwood. Materials will be available for up to three additional trees, for \$3 per tree. This is not a function of the Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers, but in case you or someone you know can't make it to the April 12th workshop, this would be a good alternative. Check with me at 688-1268 to confirm the time, room number, etc. a few days beforehand.

— Dwight Bradley

## MAY ORCHARD VISIT

Details are not yet final, but provisionally, our annual orchard visit in May will be held at Bert Gore's place in Palmer. The date will be determined after the results of our poll are in (see a later page) More on this on a postcard in early May.

## IN PRAISE OF SIBERIAN CRAB

*by Bernie Nikolai*

I've always felt that the magnificent Siberian Crab has received a "bum rap" over the years. Here we have a tree that can take -50°F with zero snowcover, and come out smiling the next spring without any injury! It has a tough corky bark which makes it virtually immune from spring sunscald injury, and it has an excellent root structure, making for an extremely tough, solidly anchored tree.

Perhaps we tend to look for the exotic in cold climates. Perhaps rumors of incompatibility with other apple cultivars, or fragile graft unions are to blame. I thought I'd relate the experience people have had using Siberian Crab as a rootstock for over 50 years here on the Canadian prairies.

Siberian Crab is extremely tough! I visited the 100-tree orchard of an elderly fruit enthusiast last fall. He claims that in 84 years he had never seen tip dieback on this cultivar, despite temperatures well in the -50°s (Fahrenheit) over the decades. If you are growing trees in central Alberta or Alaska, this is the sort of stuff we need!

As a rootstock the problem people are afraid of is potential incompatibility. I'd say 90% plus of the older apple trees here in the city of Edmonton are on Siberian Crab rootstock. Many of my trees are on this rootstock, and I've yet to see any evidence of incompatibility. Perhaps this is because all the prairie-hardy Canadian apples (Parkland, Norland, Westland, PF51, etc.) have a fair amount of Siberian Crab in their ancestry. I have heard that after a few years in Alaska a few Siberian Crabs have had their grafted-on cultivars "blow off" in a windstorm. Perhaps the answer is budding. I have never heard of this happening here in Alberta, but all Siberian Crab rootstocks are budded with the desirable cultivar at about ground level or slightly higher. Perhaps a whip-and-tongue graft just might blow off in a few trees after a few years at the graft union.

I have had good success using an interstem of a prairie-hardy tree on Siberian Crab rootstock, and grafted "exotic" apples onto the interstem. Again I have never experienced a single incompatibility problem. Cultivars like McIntosh, Discover, Summerred, Jersey Mac, etc. All seem perfectly at home on my Parkland or September Ruby frame trees on Siberian Crab roots.

I understand that last year was a test winter in Alaska due to -40°F with little or no snowcover in parts of the state. I'm confident if you check your

survivability reports you will find that the trees on Siberian Crab fared far better than those on other rootstocks. Clair Lammers in Fairbanks mentioned in his orchard very few Siberian Crab trees were killed, but there was wholesale slaughter on other rootstocks.

If you put a gun to my head and made me choose another rootstock besides Siberian, Ranetka would get the nod. But my suggestion is why risk it? Use Siberian Crab. It's tough, compatible, and as close to kill-proof in a cold climate as exists among apple cultivars. I'd suggest "budding" on young trees is the way to go, not whip and tongue grafting, which may cause a "blowout" in a small percentage of trees a few years down the line.

## IN SEARCH OF E-MAIL ADDRESSES

I am starting to collect e-mail addresses of far northern fruit growers — Alaska, Canada, far northern Lower 48, Scandinavia, Russia, etc. Please contact me at [dbradly@tundra.wr.usgs.gov](mailto:dbradly@tundra.wr.usgs.gov) if you'd like to be on this list.

*- Dwight Bradley*

## IDEAS FROM CLUB MEMBERS ON PREVENTING MOOSE FROM BROWSING ON APPLE TREES

Burt and Cindy Durham have been using human hair to discourage browsing moose since 1993, but never got a chance to see how it worked until this winter. They harvest hair from the hairbrush, spin it into a very loose yarn, and tie it around the upper twigs of each tree. This year, for the first time, a moose wandered through their young orchard in Talkeetna, and browsed all 22 of their apple trees. The hair worked. The moose ate each twig down to the hair. When the moose got some hair in its mouth, it spat out both the hair and the twig, and moved on to a new tree.

Jay Dearborn of Palmer wraps the upper twigs with a piece of aluminum foil. It seems to work — probably bothers their fillings.

**POLL FOR RESCHEDULING THE MONTHLY MEETING**

Some of our long-standing members have suggested that we move the regular monthly meetings (October, November, January, February, March, and May) to a new time, to avoid conflicts with other meetings. To help us pick the best time, please fill out and return the following poll by the end of March to Dwight Bradley at 22008 Voyles Blvd., Chugiak AK 99567. Rate each day of the month on a scale of 0 (worst) to 3 (best). If you never are likely to attend the monthly meetings, regardless of when they are held, don't vote.

1st Mon.	1st Tues.	1st Wed.	1st Thur.	1st Fri.
2nd Mon.	2nd Tues.	2nd Wed.	2nd Thur.	2nd Fri.
3rd Mon.	3rd Tues.	3rd Wed.	3rd Thur.	3rd Fri.
4th Mon.	4th Tues.	4th Wed.	4th Thur.	4th Fri.

**HOW MUCH SHOULD OUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP COST?**

The annual membership fee was raised in early 1994 to \$16. I've felt for some time that this a bit high, and would like to get input from everyone before asking people to pay their 1997 dues. Postage is \$3 to \$4 per member per year. Xeroxing is \$3 to \$4. In the years I've been involved, the club has had a few other expenses. We provide a handful of free copies of the Newsletter (for example, to the editors various fruit-grower's newsletters). We occasionally have to buy mailing labels, postage for shipping scionwood, etc. In past years we've sometimes had to absorb losses related to group orders of nursery stock. The grafting workshop pays for itself; the annual apple-tasting doesn't cost the club a thing. Our meeting places — Boyer Photography and Dimond Greenhouses — are free.

Please circle one of the following:      \$10                      \$12                      \$16                      \$20

**WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN SERVING AS A CLUB OFFICER?**

The present Board has been unchanged for three years. If anyone would like to get more involved, please indicate your interest below.

---



---

**YOUR NAME:**

---