

ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS NEWSLETTER

FALL 1997

Volume 12, Number 3

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OCTOBER MEETING REPORT

The October monthly meeting was largely devoted to club business.

- The new slate of officers listed below was nominated.
- The monthly meeting date was changed to the **SECOND TUESDAY** of each month. This decision was based on a consensus among those present, as well as those who responded to the survey that went out last Spring.
- Meetings will now be held **EVERY MONTH**, including December, June, July, and August. The winter meetings will be informal get-togethers at Boyer Photography. The summer meetings will be informal orchard tours.
- Postcards announcing each monthly meeting will be discontinued (these were a lot of work). Instead, a single announcement, once a year, will list all meeting dates and times. (The last page of this Newsletter lists the next 14 meeting dates.)
- The search for a new editor turned up no takers. Lacking a replacement, Dwight Bradley volunteered to stay on as editor. However, the number of Newsletters will be scaled back from four to three per year. Each issue will be a bit fatter than before. (A tentative publication schedule will be mid-October, mid-February, and mid-June, with deadlines for contributions being about the 7th of those months.)
- The dues will remain at \$16 per year. Those who responded to last Spring's survey were divided on whether or not to lower the dues, but the overwhelming sentiment at the October meeting was to keep the rate at \$16.

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR 1997 DUES?

If you still haven't paid your 1997 dues, please send your check for \$16 to Pam Warner. This will be your last Newsletter unless you pay up.

NOVEMBER MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The monthly meeting for November will be held on Thursday, Nov. 13, 1997 at Boyer Photography, Boyer Photography, 2813 North Star, Anchorage. Phone 561-2885. Located on North Star, one block west of Matanuska Dairy and McDonalds, between Northern Lights and Benson.

On the agenda: electing a new slate of club officers, to take the place of some of those who have served for the last four or more years. Nominees, selected by those present at the October meeting, are:

Kevin Irving, President
Bob Boyer, Vice President
Debbie Hinchey, Secretary and Treasurer
Bert Gore, Board Member at Large
Dwight Bradley, Newsletter Editor

OREOLE APPLE TREE

—by *Tom Marshall, Anchorage*

In 1969, weary of looking at my neighbor's unfinished garage through my one picture window, I planted what I thought was a crab apple from Swedberg Nursery in battle Lake, Minn. My thought was that its early season pink blooms and foliage would beautify my

house near Merrill Field and mask that garage. The tree cost \$4.25.

Five years later to my surprise the tree bore white blossoms, not the pink ones stated in the advertisement. Oh well, they were fragrant and abundant so why should I complain. To my greater surprise the "crab apples" grew to 3-inch diameter yellow-green apples streaked with rays of red and orange where exposed to the sun. I rechecked my order and the nursery had interpreted my handwriting as Oreole apple instead of ornamental.

The Oreole is a cross between Yellow Transparent and Livland Raspberry apples. The tree is characteristically slow to get started but when it does, it is an abundant annual producer. The apples have a relatively long shelf life. This year the tree produced over 150 pounds of apples, many weighing about 9 ounces. After 28 years the tree has about a 10-inch diameter trunk, is about 20 feet tall, and 25 feet wide. Every year I cut many branches from the center of the tree in an effort to achieve an inverted funnel shape. A neighbor eagerly removes the prunings for his parrot who shreds and eats both bark and wood.

I've had no insect problem since I started painting the trunks and longer branches of the apple, plum, and cherry trees with a homemade mixture of interior latex white paint diluted with water plus a small amount (1/2 teaspoon per half pint) of Bordeaux mixture. This annual treatment also seems to cut down on fungal and lichen growth and probably also helps prevent bark damage in the springtime by lessening heat absorption. Very thorough clearing of dropped fruit, leaves, and grass clippings may also help eliminate insects.

To improve pollination, experiment with hardiness and other varieties, save yard space, and just for the fun of it, I learned to graft from the Encyclopedia Britannica. I've probably carried this to an extreme by placing 18 grafts on the one Oreole tree. Four grafts have duplicates so there are 14 different varieties represented; this year, 11 varieties bore fruit. I hope to surprise the apple tasting party next fall with a couple of unusual varieties.

A problem with having numerous grafts is that unless you label them carefully and mark them with colored tape you may cut some off in the annual mandatory springtime frenzy.

I do not use those tiny stainless steel wires that come with aluminum write-on labels because I choked off several three-year-old grafts by not observing that the growth of the branch had overtightened the wires. The labels are fine and very durable but attach them loosely with stretchy polyethylene tape.

Generally speaking, the Oreole makes a very vigorous host tree for scions although Summer Red and Wolf River are quite stunted and unproductive after six years. Geneva Early, Parkland, and Novosibirski Sweet scions are so vigorous that they must be severely pruned to keep them from dominating the Oreole tree.

I have stopped using polyester (non-stretching) tree wrap to ward off mice and voles. I strangled several good producing trees on the homestead near Wasilla by failing to loosen the fabric semi-annually to allow for growth. I believe damage can occur even during one growing season. Now I use low density polyethylene stretchable wrap several feet above the snow line because I believe rabbits will again be a significant threat. The rabbit cycle is on the rise in the Matanuska Valley and according to newspaper accounts domesticated rabbits in the Anchorage area may create a menace to fruit trees in parts of town where cover is abundant and predators are few.

I leave my moose fence up all year round. In summer the fences give a measure of protection from children playing hide and seek and from reckless lawn mowers. Most of the fences are eight-foot-high standing coils of driveway reinforcing steel wire grids. I have used it for 15 years and it's effective providing branches don't poke through the grid thereby enticing the browser further up the tree. A ring of surveyors' tape threaded through the fence grid at eye level to a moose also helps, I believe. The props and ties used to support ripening fruit are left on the trees until enough leaves drop. This prevents an irrational pruning by those first wet snows of fall such as the one foot that fell Oct. 13, 1991.

I heartily recommend growing fruit trees. Coming from Wyoming in 1958 I had never been close to an apple tree until my Oreole came in the mail. There seem to be new problems to be solved every year but also new satisfactions — and of course more good fruit. One of the intangible benefits is the friendships with members of the Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Association, and the sharing of information, scionwood, and the apple tastings.

My challenge in 1998 is how to legally prevent magpies from pecking deep holes in apples. One really fat one broke off an entire graft loaded with fruit. A net solves the problem with small trees but is a real hassle on a tree 25 feet wide and 20 feet tall. Nets may also cause more damage than the magpies on a large tree. Stuffed owls work for a week or so if rotated every day. Pinwheels and spiral tape

spin only when the breeze is blowing. When I lived in Hot Springs County, Wyoming, magpies were subject to a 25-cent per bird bounty because of their habit of eating Hungarian grouse eggs and squabs. They are now classified as songbirds and protected nationwide. Whoever did this had a poor ear for music. Stay tuned!

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RESULTS OF THE SEPTEMBER 1997 ALASKAN APPLE-TASTING

—by *Dwight Bradley*

The annual tasting of Alaska-grown apples was held at Bradleys in Peters Creek in late September. About 30 people attended, and 23 turned in scoresheets. Bob Boyer contributed three of the top four apples this year: the winner, Ginger Gold, plus runner-up September Ruby and Sunrise. Tom Marshall's Oriole rounded out the top four. For the second straight year, Bob analyzed each apple for sugar content with a refractometer. There was very little correlation between sugar content and apparent sweetness of the apples.

Variety	Grower	Score	Sugar content (brix)
Ginger Gold		8.63	12.5
Sept Ruby		7.39	14
Oriole		6.93	12
Sunrise		6.89	12.5
Vista Bella		6.67	13
Norland	Franke	6.55	12
Parkland	O'Brien	6.30	13
Mantet	O'Brien	6.25	13
Joyce		6.15	16.5
Norland	O'Brien	6.07	11
8th & M		6.04	12.5
Hazen		6.02	11.5
Parkland	Bradley	5.93	13
Centennial		5.91	15
Norland	Mary Lou	5.91	10.5
Hazen		5.87	10
Trailman		5.85	12.5
Wealthy		5.72	11.5
Red Duchess		5.70	11
Goodland		5.68	11.5
15th St.		5.66	13
Geneva Early		5.63	13
Norland	Bradley	5.54	12
Red Transparent		5.52	11
Chestnut		5.45	14.5

Parkland	Franke	5.28	13
Roda Mantet		5.22	11.5
Klatts Select		5.17	10
CGE	O'Brien	5.16	14.5
Parkland	Vochoska	5.14	12
Norland	Irving	5.11	11
Unknown	Harris	5.04	12
Red Melba	Muggs	4.95	14
Westland	Vochoska	4.71	11
Red Mantet		4.61	12
Unknown	Muggs	4.59	13.5
Westland	Mary Lou	4.39	12
Rosthern 15		4.34	13.5
Westland	Franke	4.34	12.5
CGE		4.32	13
Heyer 20		4.30	13
10th & E		4.27	15
Red Melba		4.27	13
Yellow Transparent	Irving	4.22	9
Unknown	Franke	4.13	11
Heyer 12		3.80	9.5
Westland	Irving	3.76	11.5
Heyer 12	Bean	3.70	10.5
Rosthern 18		3.59	11
Yellow Transparent		3.32	9.5
Whitney		3.07	15

FOUR-YEAR SUMMARY OF ALASKAN APPLE-TASTING RESULTS

— by *Dwight Bradley*

The following table summarizes the results of four consecutive years of apple tastings of apples grown in the Anchorage-Matanuska Valley region. This is a partial list of all the varieties that have been brought at one time or another to the tastings. For this table, I took only the top 10 for each year from 1994 through 1997. In some cases, such as Parkland in 1995, an apple will be ranked more than once. This is because more than one grower contributed fruit of a particular variety and each was ranked separately. The absence of a given variety in a given year could be due to many possible causes: For example, Oriole didn't rank in 1994 because Tom Marshall didn't bring any to the tasting, whereas Mantet and

State Fair have been way back in the pack during certain years. Bob Boyer's Ginger Gold is just starting to come into its own as a regularly producing tree; I don't think it bore fruit in 1995.

The varieties are listed in approximate order from most to least successful. This involved some judgment; certain varieties could move up or down a few notches. The number of first-place finishes (column 3) and the number of years in the top ten (column 2) were the two most important factors. Clearly, Norland and Parkland deserve their good reputations for consistency (and hardiness) but as for quality, they aren't up there with Oriole or Ginger Gold.

In the next newsletter, I'll follow this short study up with whatever information I can dig up from the pre-1994 tastings.

Variety	Years in Top 10	No. 1 Finishes	1994 rank	1995 rank	1996 rank	1997 rank
Ginger Gold	3	2	8		1	1
Oriole	3	1		1	2	3
Parkland	4		3	2,6	5	7
Norland	3		2	3, 5, 10		6, 10
Mantet	2	1	1			8
Lodi	2		4	4		
15th St.	2		10		4	
Hugh Harris Mystery	2			8	10	
Roda Mantet	1		2			
Sept Ruby	1					2
State Fair	1				3	
Sunrise	1					4
Vista Bella	1					5
Karl Franke Mystery	1		5			
Golden Transparent	1		6			
Canada Red	1				7	
Arvid Miller Mystery	1		7			
Whitney	1			7		
8th & M	1				9	
Rescue	1		9			
Novosibirski Sweet	1			9		
Joyce	1					9

ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS 1997-1998 MEETING SCHEDULE

Month	Date	Year	Day	Time	Theme	Location
November	13	1997	2nd Thurs.	7 PM	Monthly meeting	Boyer Photography
December	11	1997	2nd Thurs.	7 PM	Monthly meeting	Boyer Photography
January	8	1998	2nd Thurs.	7 PM	Monthly meeting	Boyer Photography
February	12	1998	2nd Thurs.	7 PM	Monthly meeting. Scionwood order.	Boyer Photography
March	12	1998	2nd Thurs.	7 PM	Monthly meeting	Boyer Photography
April	4	1998	1st Sat.	1 PM	Grafting workshop	Dimond Greenhouses
May	14	1998	2nd Thurs.	7 PM	Orchard tour	Boyer Photography unless otherwise announced
June	11	1998	2nd Thurs.	7 PM	Orchard tour	Boyer Photography unless otherwise announced
July	9	1998	2nd Thurs.	7 PM	Orchard tour	Boyer Photography unless otherwise announced
August	13	1998	2nd Thurs.	7 PM	Orchard tour	Boyer Photography unless otherwise announced
September	25	1998	4th Sat.	7 PM	Apple Tasting	Bradleys
October	8	1998	2nd Thurs.	7 PM	Monthly meeting. Rootstock order.	Boyer Photography
November	12	1998	2nd Thurs.	7 PM	Monthly meeting	Boyer Photography
December	10	1998	2nd Thurs.	7 PM	Monthly meeting	Boyer Photography

Addresses, phone numbers, and directions:

Boyer Photography, 2813 North Star, Anchorage. Phone 561-2885. Located on North Star, one block west of Matanuska Dairy and McDonalds, between Northern Lights and Benson.

Dwight and Lauren Bradley, 22008 Voyles Blvd., Peters Creek. Phone 688-1268. Take the Glen Highway to the South Peters Creek exit, which is labeled "Peters Creek" if coming from Anchorage or "South Peters Creek" if coming from the Matanuska Valley. At the end of the ramp, turn north (left if coming from Anchorage, right if coming from the Matanuska Valley). Shortly you come to a four-way stop. Go straight across, on Voyles Blvd., for 0.6 mile, until the road ends at the base of a fairly steep hill at a "T". The driveway is straight across the intersection.

Dimond Greenhouses, 1050 W. Dimond Blvd., Anchorage. Located about half a mile west of Costco, on the same side of the street.

Please detach this page and post it in a prominent place.