

# ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS NEWSLETTER

Winter 2001

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## Editors Note:

Well, the new year is upon us, and I am happy once again to be elected your newsletter editor. We gladly receive Dan Elliot as our new President, and thank Kevin Irving for moving into the position of Vice President. Debbie Hinchey was re-elected as our treasurer, which we greatly appreciate as she knows the ins and outs of how to legally keep our organization up and running! Also, our Board Members at Large are Dwight Bradley and Sally Karabelnikoff.

Since the last issue in September, we held our annual Apple Tasting, and, thanks to Dwight's hard work, I am including the results in this issue, plus a report from Jerry Appleseed Nursery in Ketchikan. Use them to decide what varieties you might like at our grafting workshop in April!

We also had a meeting in November on wine and liqueur making, with some wonderful samples of homemade beverages by Bob Boyer. I have included an article called "The Ten Most Common Winemaking Mistakes," from the Spagnol's website ([www.spagnols.com](http://www.spagnols.com)). They have many other interesting publications at the site as well.

Our December meeting consisted of the election of new Board Members and a wonderful video on pruning brought in by

Dan Elliot, which he reviews later in this issue along with several books.

***Our next meeting*** will be held at Boyer Photography, 2813 North Star on Thursday, January 11, 2001 at 7 PM. We will be discussing orchard planning and putting it to practical use with Bob Boyer's property. Take Northern Lights Blvd just past Arctic and the Matanuska Dairy to North Star and make a left. You will see Boyer Photography on the left just past the loading docks at the dairy.

I am very pleased with the contribution response I received for this issue. Please consider submitting a short note yourself for publication next time. I would love some recipes to use in the "Featured Fruit" section, or tell me what you are interested in for our new "Meet a Member" section. We also have a "Member to Member" section for short pieces of information or want adds by our members. The Spring issue will go out around May 1, 2001. I would like all of you to notice that my email address has changed in the newsletter heading, so if you want to contact me that way, make sure you use my current address.

It is also time to renew your membership if you have not already done so. Get \$16 to Debbie Hinchey soon, and please update addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses.

# Annual Tasting of Alaska-Grown Apples

By D. BRADLEY

## 2000 Results

The annual Alaska-grown apple tasting was held in early October at Bradley's in Peters Creek. About 30 people were there (including a reporter from the Chugiak-Eagle River Star) and 19 people rated the apples. We rated 35 different varieties, and 15 repeats. The highest-rated apples this year were September Ruby (grown by Bob Boyer), Parkland (grown by Karl Franke), 8<sup>th</sup> & M Mystery apple, Geneva Early (grown by Tom Marshall), and Ginger Gold (grown by Bob Boyer). Altogether we rated four Parklands and four Norlands. It was a bit late for both of them but clearly Parkland did better this year, with two specimens in the top ten. The best Norland finished only 27<sup>th</sup>.

Another fifteen or so apple varieties were put on display but not tasted, either because they were obviously unripe, or because better examples of the same thing were being tasted. These included Crimson Beauty, Novosibirski Sweet, Collett, Whitney Crab, Hazen, Gravenstein, Pristine, Northern Lights, Arctic, Lodi, Arbor Dale, Wynoochie Early, Liberty, and Rescue. Also on display were a few pears (David, Menie, Goldspice) and plums (Roppa). The list of fruits being grown in south-central Alaska keeps getting longer.

Variety	Avg. rating	Grower	Brix
September Ruby	7.47	BB	17.0
Parkland	7.38	KF	12.0
8th & M mystery (apple)	7.09	-	12.0
Geneva Early	7.09	TM	14.0
Ginger Gold	7.07	BB	13.0
Harold's	7.06	KF	11.5
Parkland	6.87	DE	13.0
Jersey Mac	6.84	LC	13.0
Goodland	6.79	DE	13.0

Variety	Avg. rating	Grower	Brix
Oriole	6.76	TM	-
Wealthy	6.75	KF	-
Sunrise	6.61	BB	14.0
Yellow Transparent	6.61	BB	12.0
Roda Mantet	6.57	KF	12.0
15th Street mystery	6.50	-	11.5
Hugh Harris mystery	6.50	HH	11.5
Collett	6.40	BB	12.0
Viking	6.39	KC	-
Geneva Early	6.36	KF	11.5
New York 394	6.31	KF	12.0
Chestnut	6.20	BB	13.0
Spenard mystery	6.10	BB	12.5
Goodland	5.96	DO	13.0
Red Mantet	5.96	-	12.0
Heyer 20	5.92	KC	14.5
Mantet	5.88	DO	13.0
Norland	5.87	DE	12.0
8th & M mystery (crab)	5.85	-	-
Heyer 20	5.84	DE	13.0
Yellow Jay	5.81	JD	11.0
Norland	5.68	KF	11.5
Red Melba	5.57	DO	14.0
Heyer 20	5.47	DB	13.0
Parkland	5.35	RS	12.5
Norland	5.31	DB	10.5
Morden 359	5.18	DE	12.0
Parkland	5.13	BB	11.0
Centennial	5.06	BB	14.0
Dentist mystery	4.78	-	14.0
Norland	4.74	DO	11.5
Yellow Transparent	4.66	DB	12.0
Heyer 12	4.64	DE	11.5
Centennial	4.46	DB	15.5
Westland	3.89	KF	10.0
Unknown Crab	3.87	-	12.0
Rosthern 18	3.35	KC	14.0
Heyer 12	3.08	DB	10.5
State Fair	3.02	DO	10.0

## Sugar Content

Bob and Marianne Boyer tested each variety for sugar content. We were surprised, as we are every year, by some of the winners in this department. Novosibirski Sweet, which was not tasted, finished first with a sugar content (measured in Brix) of 19.0. Runners-up were September Ruby (17.0), Centennial (15.5), and one of the Heyer 20's (14.5).



## Seven-Year Results

The next table ranks the Alaskan-grown varieties that have been tasted over the past seven years, since I've been keeping track. The order is subjective, based on number of years in the top ten, and on number of times ranked first, second, or third. This list doesn't change much anymore from one year to the next, because the data have been accumulating for so long. The strong finish of September Ruby moves it up, in my opinion, from 13<sup>th</sup> to about 3<sup>rd</sup>. Although it has only three top-ten finishes, this is because it is a new variety. In contrast, Mantet, Red Duchess, and Viking have each finished first, but they've been around for awhile and have ranked very poorly in other years. State Fair is perhaps the best example of this: it has finished as high as third, but ranked last out of 35 varieties this year.

Every year I mention a caveat regarding the ranking of Norland and Parkland. These apples have, indeed, finished in the top ten most years, and one or the other ranks #2 or #3 fairly regularly. The qualifier is that we usually sample three or four of each, but only the highest-scoring ones make the top-ten list. If other above average varieties were brought to the tasting in such numbers, they would probably rank a bit higher.

It also bears mentioning that this is a ranking of *eating quality during the last week of September to the first week of October*. Some apples are overripe by this time and don't stand a chance. Chinese Golden Early, if properly thinned for size and picked immediately before tasting, would probably score quite well in early September, but by

the end of September every one in the barrel is brown and mushy. Yellow Transparent and Geneva Early would undoubtedly score better if tasted a few weeks earlier, as would Norland and Parkland.

Of course, fresh eating isn't the only use for apples. Westland is just plain lousy for eating but they are great for cooking. Westland apples are big, hardy, and belong in every Anchorage-area orchard.

Variety	top 10	1st	2nd	3rd
Ginger Gold	4	2		
Oriole	6	1	1	2
Sept Ruby	3	1	1	
Parkland	7		2	2
Norland	5		2	1
Mantet	3	1		
Viking	2	1		
Red Duchess	1	1		
15th	3			
Roda Mantet	2		1	
Lodi	2			
Geneva Early	2		1	
8th & M apple	2			1
Harris	2			
Sunrise	2			
Rescue	2			
State Fair	1			1
Vista Bella	1			
Karl Franke mystery	1			
Golden Transparent	1			
Canada Red	1			
Arvid Miller mystery	1			
Whitney	1			
Novosibirski Sweet	1			
Joyce	1			
Red Mantet	1			
Pristine	1			
Patrick #3	1			
Jersey Mac	1			
Harolds	1			
Goodland	1			



## **JERRY APPLESEED NURSERY**

**APPLE TREES FOR SOUTHEAST ALASKA**

Jerry & Joni Koerner  
P.O. Box 6292  
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

October 30, 2000

Tami Schlies  
P.O. Box 672255  
Chugiak, Alaska 99567

Dear Tami,

We are just now finishing up our apple evaluations on our latest ripening varieties here at the nursery. Ketchikan experienced a much nicer spring than 1999's very late and very cold spring, which severely effected our bloom time, pollination and ripening dates. This year our bloom time was normal but many people reported a severe reduction in the actual number of blooms on their trees. That was certainly the case here at our nursery also. Pollination for the early blooming cherries and plums was very light resulting in few fruit being set. Many of our apple trees that bloomed and set fruit last did not even flower this year and alot of our 5 and 6 year old that should have flowered did not.

Inspite of all that, we did manage to ripen 58 varieties of apples, with at least 15 new varieties for 2000. Of the new varieties Early Sweet, Exeter Cross, Kalco and Bouquet of Burgundy all showed promise as dessert quality apples. Our favorite eating apples are still Laxton's Fortune (Cox's Orange Pippin x Wealthy), Sansa (Gala x Akane), Mollies Delicious, Sops of Wine and Williams Pride. We had good crops of Akane, James Grieve, Wynooche Early, Tydeman Early, Liveland Raspberry and Pristine.

Since we are running out of room here at the nursery for many more new trees, we have been experimenting with growing trees on Bud 9 rootstocks planted in half barrels and plastic tubs. We are also espaliering a number of varieties on Bud-9 rootstocks to trellises. We have now reached the 400 point for different early ripening apple varieties that are on trial here in Ketchikan and if we can find the space we will be adding more as we continue our research.

Sincerely yours,

Jerrold F. Koerner

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Phone (907) 225-5098

# Apple Varieties and Their Characteristics Grown in Ketchikan Alaska 2000

Color: C=Cream, G=Green, O=Orange, P=Pink, R=Red, Y=Yellow

Size: S=small less than 2", M=Medium 2"-3", L=Large more than 3"

Texture: S=Soft, M=Medium, H=Hard

Rating: 1=Inferior, 2=Fair, 3=Good, 4=Very Good, 5=Excellent, 6=Superior

No.	Variety	Size	Color	Texture	Crisp	Sweet	Tart	Ripens	Rating	Description
1	Advance	M	Y/R	M	Y		Y	Sept	3	High Disease Resistance
2	Akane	S/M	R/Y	H	Y		Y	Sept	4	Superior to Pink Pearl
3	Almata	M	R	M	Y	Y	Y	Oct	4	Did Not Fully Ripen
4	Arthur Turner	M	G	H	Y		Y	Oct	2	
5	Blairmont	S	Y	M		Y	Y	Sept	3	Quality Improved From Past Years
6	Bonnars Early	M	Y/R	M			Y	Sept	2	Susceptible to Scab
7	Breakey	M	R	M			Y	Aug	2	Different Variety from Burgundy
8	Bouquet of Burgundy	M	R/Y	M	Y	Y	Y	Oct	3	Not Fully Ripe
9	Burgundy	M	G/R	H	Y		Y	Oct	2	Dropped Before Fully Ripe
10	Chinese Golden Early	S	G	H	Y		Y	Aug	2	Purdue University Introduction
11	CMR 2T13	M/L	R/G	H	Y	Y		Oct	6	
12	Devonshire Quarrendon	S	R	M			Y	Sept	2	
13	Duchess of Oldenburg	M	G/R	H	Y		Y	Sept	3	
14	Dudley	M/L	G	H	Y		Y	Sept	2	
15	Earligold	M	Y	M			Y	Sept	2	Susceptible to Scab
16	Early Russet	M/L	G/R	H	Y		Y	Oct	3	
17	Early Sweet	M/L	G/Y	H	Y	Y		Sept	5	Very Sweet
18	Emmeth Early	M/L	G	H	Y		Y	Sept	4	Scab Resistant
19	Exeter Cross	M/L	R/O	M	Y	Y	Y	Sept	5	Juicy Nice Flavor
20	Geeveston Fanny	M	R/Y	H	Y	Y	Y	Oct	4	Scab Resistant
21	George Cave	M/L	G/R	S			Y	Aug	2	
22	Golden Pearmain	M	O/G	H	Y		Y	Oct	4	Scab Resistant
23	Greensleeves	M	G	H	Y		Y	Oct	4	Juicy
24	Herefordshire Redstreak	S/M	G/R	H	Y	Y	Y	Oct	3	Quality Improved From Past Years
25	Irish Peach	M	G/P	M	Y		Y	Sept	3	Very Juicy
26	James Grieve	L	Y/R	M	Y		Y	Oct	5	
27	Jefferis	M	G/R	H	Y		Y	Oct	3	
28	Kalco	M	G/R	H	Y		Y	Sept	3	
29	Kerry Pippin	S	G	H	Y		Y	Sept	2	

No.	Variety	Size	Color	Texture	Crisp	Sweet	Tart	Ripens	Rating	Description
30	Late Transparent	M	G	M			Y	Oct	4	Scab Resistant
31	Laxtons Fortune	M	R/Y	M	Y	Y	Y	Oct	5	Excellent Flavor But Cracks Badly
32	Lord Lambourne	M	G/R	M			Y	Oct	3	Susceptable to Scab
33	Lubsk Queen	M	O/P	S			Y	Oct	3	
34	May Apple	S/M	Y/R	M	Y		Y	Aug	3	
35	Mertons Worcester	S/M	R/G	H	Y		Y	Aug	3	
36	Mollies Delicious	M	R	H	Y		Y	Sept	2	Cracked Badly
37	Morden 363	L	Y/R	M	Y	Y	Y	Oct	5	Great Flavor
38	Northfield Beauty	M	R/G	H	Y		Y	Sept	2	
39	Patton	M	R/G	H	Y		Y	Oct	3	
40	Pfirsichroter Sommerapfel	S/M	C/R	M			Y	Sept	3	Better Color This Year
41	Pristine	S/M	Y	M	Y		Y	Sept	3	Slightly Aromatic
42	Red Baron	S/M	R/Y	H	Y		Y	Sept	4	Scab Resistant
43	Redfree	M/L	R/Y	M	Y	Y	Y	Oct	3	
44	Red Melba	M	R/G	M	Y	Y	Y	Sept	2	High Disease Resistance
45	Red Wealthy	M	R/G	H	Y		Y	Sept	4	Good McIntosh Flavor
46	Rosthern 18	S	G/R	H	Y		Y	Oct	2	Susceptable to Scab
47	Sansa	S/M	O/G	H	Y		Y	Oct	2	Juicy
48	Sops of Wine	M	R/G	M	Y	Y	Y	Oct	6	Susceptable to Scab and Canker
49	Summerred	M/L	R	H			Y	Oct	4	
50	Summer Queen	M/L	G	H	Y		Y	Sept	3	Susceptable to Scab
51	Summer Scarlet	S/M	R/G	M	Y		Y	Oct	2	Did Not Color or Ripen
52	Sunrise	M	R/Y	M	Y		Y	Aug	3	Scab Resistant Can Be Bitter
53	Tetofsky	S/M	Y	M	Y		Y	Sept	4	Susceptable to Scab
54	Tydemman Early Red	M/L	R/C	M	Y		Y	Aug	2	
55	Vista Bella	M	R/Y	M	Y		Y	Sept	4	
56	Williams Early Red	M	Y/R	H	Y		Y	Sept	3	
57	Williams Pride	M/L	R/Y	H	Y		Y	Oct	4	Vinous
58	Wynooche Early	S/M	R/C	H	Y		Y	Sept	4	High Disease Resistance
							Y	Oct	4	High Disease Resistance



# The Ten Most Common Winemaking Mistakes

*(and how to avoid them)*

*At Spagnol's, we love what we do. We're hoping you'll see why we love it. Home winemaking is easy, and we're trying to make it even easier. We've compiled a list of the 10 most common winemaking mistakes—mistakes we've all made in our own winemaking. We'd like you to read it, tape it to your fridge, and use it for reference when you're making wine.*

*If you need help with something not covered here, call our toll-free help line or fax us toll-free. You'll find the numbers at the end of this brochure. Phone us. We're here to help you.*

## 1. Using the Wrong Equipment

When you start making your wine, don't just grab anything you see around the house—like your Grandma's pickle crock, peanut butter pails, garbage cans, or wooden spoons. These can't be sanitized easily and might taint your wine.

Proper winemaking equipment is made of food-grade plastic and is designed to give you the best results possible. Life's a lot easier when you've got the right gear. (Kind of like mountain climbing—what if you forgot the rope that holds you to the side of the mountain?) Your retailer can help you find the equipment you need.

## 2. Dirty Equipment

Cleaning means removing visible residue. It's really important. It's kind of like washing your dishes—you aren't likely to make dinner with dirty pots and pans. Use an unscented detergent on your equipment and rinse well. Your retailer can suggest something appropriate. Once everything is clean, you can move onto sanitation...

## 3. Poor Sanitation

Sanitizing means treating equipment with a substance that will reduce or remove bacteria. There are several sanitizers you can use, including metabisulphite solution and Iodophor. They all work a little differently. Ask your winemaking shop for advice when choosing a sanitizer. Or you can call us and we'll recommend something that suits your needs.

Clean and sanitize everything that touches your wine—fermenters, carboys, hoses, thermometers, spoons. You get the picture. It's easy and worth it: ninety percent of winemaking failures can be traced to poor cleaning or faulty sanitation.

## 4. Ignoring or Changing the Instructions

Follow each manufacturer's instructions carefully. Wine kit manufacturers usually have plenty of experience making wine, and their instructions should be clear and easy to follow. These people find the best procedures for getting the best possible results from the ingredients in the kit.

## 5. Using the Wrong Water

Many people think they need to be concerned about the water they use in winemaking. In reality, this is one of those "problems" that is not a big deal.

If your tap water is drinkable, chances are you can make wine with it. That said, some water can leave your wine hazy or give it off flavours. If you know your water is very high in minerals, is metallic, or has high levels of chlorine, you should think about getting a water filter or using bottled water.

## 6. Not Adding the Yeast Correctly

Be sure to follow the kit instructions when adding your yeast. We recommend sprinkling the yeast over the surface of 18 to 25°C (65 to 80°F) juice and not stirring. If

the temperature is wrong, the yeast won't be happy. And if you stir it in, you can suffocate it.

Observant winemakers eventually notice that our kit instructions don't match the instructions printed on our yeast packages. If you use the yeast manufacturer's rehydration instructions, you must follow them exactly—sloppy rehydration will seriously harm your yeast. Simply sprinkling dry yeast over the surface of the juice is much easier and works great.

### **7. Poor Temperature Control**

Kit instructions tell you to ferment your wine within a specific temperature range. We recommend 20 to 23°C (70 to 75°F). Yeast likes these temperatures and it doesn't like fluctuations. In other words, yeast is going to be happy in the same kind of environment that people find comfortable.

Temperature control is important, but you don't need to get obsessive over it.

Thousands of people make great wine in a closet in their apartment. Just use your common sense. If you live in Manitoba, don't make wine in your garage in the winter. If you live in Texas, don't make wine in your attic under the sweltering summer sun unless your attic is air conditioned.

### **8. Adding Sulphite and Sorbate at the Wrong Time**

If you add these too early, your wine will stop fermenting and the yeast won't convert any more sugar into alcohol. The wine will end up extra sweet and the alcohol level will be low.

If you make this mistake, give your local winemaking shop a call, or call Spagnol's help line. As long as you follow the instructions, you should be fine.

### **9. Leaving out the Sulphite**

Kits include a package of sulphite which you stir into the wine. Sulphite prevents your wine from spoiling, so please don't leave it out. Wine without added sulphite may have a shelf life as short as one month.

Some people blame sulphites for headaches, allergic reactions and hangovers. In reality, these conditions are usually caused by compounds other than sulphite. Winemakers have been using sulphite for thousands of years, and modern winemakers (like you) still can't do without it. However, if you think you are sensitive or allergic to sulphites, please consult your doctor.

### **10. Not Stirring Enough**

Eventually you need to clear your wine. You do this by adding natural substances like gelatin and a clay called bentonite. These come with the kit and need to be dispersed thoroughly throughout the wine. This means stirring. And stirring. And stirring. Even if your arm gets sore.

*Just a final note: Everyone wants to drink their wine the day it's bottled. Give it some time! Even if it tastes fine right away, it will get much better. Try to ignore it for three months. It's worth it.*

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Designed by Spagnol's

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## **Book Reviews:**

by *TAMI SCHLIES*

The December meeting revealed that many people were unfamiliar with NAFEX - the North American Fruit Explorers. Our group started out as a chapter of NAFEX before

they did away with chapters for legal reasons. NAFEX still exists, however, and is a great source of information for its members. They have a mail order library with both books and videos.



One of the best parts of being a member is the quarterly publication of **Pomona Magazine**. It is a nice sized booklet of contributions by NAFEX members with a few regular columns such as "Back to Basics" and "Beginners' Section." The topics are quite widespread, from growers in Alaska to Florida growing all kinds of fruit and nuts.

You can visit NAFEX online and enroll as a member at [www.nafex.org](http://www.nafex.org). Or you can mail \$10 for a yearly membership to:

NAFEX  
1716 Apples Road  
Chapin, IL 62628

Canadian membership is \$15 in US funds and all other countries are \$17 in US funds.

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### **Reviews continued:**

by *DAN ELLIOT*

Happy New Year From the New President! At the December meeting I passed around three books related to training and pruning I borrowed from the NAFEX library. Debbie Hinchey suggested I write short reviews on them for the members not present. The video mentioned last here was shown at the December meeting and was also from the NAFEX library.

**Physiological Fruit Tree Training for Intensive Growing**, Brunner, T., 1990, 286 pages.

This book explains more than you might want to know about intensive training and then some, and it does it in more words and unfamiliar scientific terms than you probably will want. I don't know if the translator is at fault because English is his second language or because he translated too accurately and the Hungarian author shares the blame - in any case, this is heavy reading. A mild sample: pruning was once

described as "special agrotechnical interventions."

**Training and Pruning Apple and Pear Trees**, Forshey et al, 1992, 166 pages.

This is an excellent book - easy to read and practical. It is both a primer and a summary of current theory and practice. Each chapter is followed by a reference section listing extensive sources - a resource in itself. This is a desirable book to have in one's library.

For those of you trying to train older trees, I will pass on to you an unusual technique described for spreading a large limb: "a series of saw cuts on the underside of the limb near the crotch will allow the basal section to be bent."

**Espaliers and Vines for the Home Gardener**, Perkins, Harold O., 1964, 200 pages.

This book has a few good drawings and photos of espaliers as well as two or three pages on training and pruning. It also has 50 pages describing 50 fine ornamentals to espalier and about 70 pages describing 70 fine vines to espalier. This book reminds me of the type of book one receives after joining a book club because of some great introductory offer. If you are looking for advice to grow an espalier, look further.

**Pruning Apple Trees to a Central Leader System**, Kentucky, 25 minutes.

This video does an excellent job showing how to train and prune to a central leader each year from whip to bearing mature tree - short and sweet, easy to understand.

Training and pruning early in a tree's life establish its lifetime's framework

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## Reviews continued:

by SEYMOUR MILLS

**The Alaskan Bootlegger's Bible**, Leon W. Kania.

(They will give a 20% discount if our organization orders 10 or more copies in one order. It is \$21.95 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling.)

This is an excellent book of information and very complete. It ranges from brewing the most basic beer and wine to making your own malt or using commercial liqueur extracts to vodka to make amaretto, Drambuie, apricot brandy, etc. There are numerous recipes with fruit, blossoms, grain, and milk, rice, potatoes, beets, carrots, honey, pea pods, bread, birch sap, etc. There are recipes for apple wine and applejack. It also has sections on making your own beer capper, balanced beam scales using two coffee cans, and even a still.

All the processes are very complete and simple - no scientific jargon. There is a whole section on liqueurs made from common fruit from the store or Alaskan cranberries. You can also make your own

syrup for liqueurs to add to common whiskey or vodka.

**Small Farmer's Journal** PO Box 1627, Sisters, Oregon, 97759, 541-549-2064, 1-800-876-2893.

I strongly encourage everyone to buy a subscription to this publication. One of our feed stores here sells current copies. It is a large (10 1/2" by 13 1/2") 128 page quarterly issue (Fall 2000.) The editor has reprinted one book **Soil and Health** using 7 issues and is now reprinting **Humans and the Farmer** in it's third installment. It covers research done in England, India, and Africa over 50 years ago. All the back issues to cover these articles are available. Usually they run a special of buy 2 get 1 free, or free back issues for a gift subscription or renewals. Everyone who raises or eats anything owes it to themselves to read this series. It's \$8.50 per issue or \$30 per year. If in doubt, call and order a sample copy of Fall 2000. It is all written by or about people who are farming. I'll bet you can't resist subscribing. They have articles about all forms of agriculture in both current and old reprinted articles from the turn of the century.

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## Updated Apple-Tree Growth Curves For Peters Creek, Alaska

By D. BRADLEY

In January 1998 I measured the heights of the 77 apple trees then growing in our orchard and plotted tree height against age to get a growth curve. In November 2000 I made new measurements of the 100 trees now growing. The results are shown in four graphs below.

In the first graph, both 1998 and 2000 data are plotted together and these show the same overall trend.

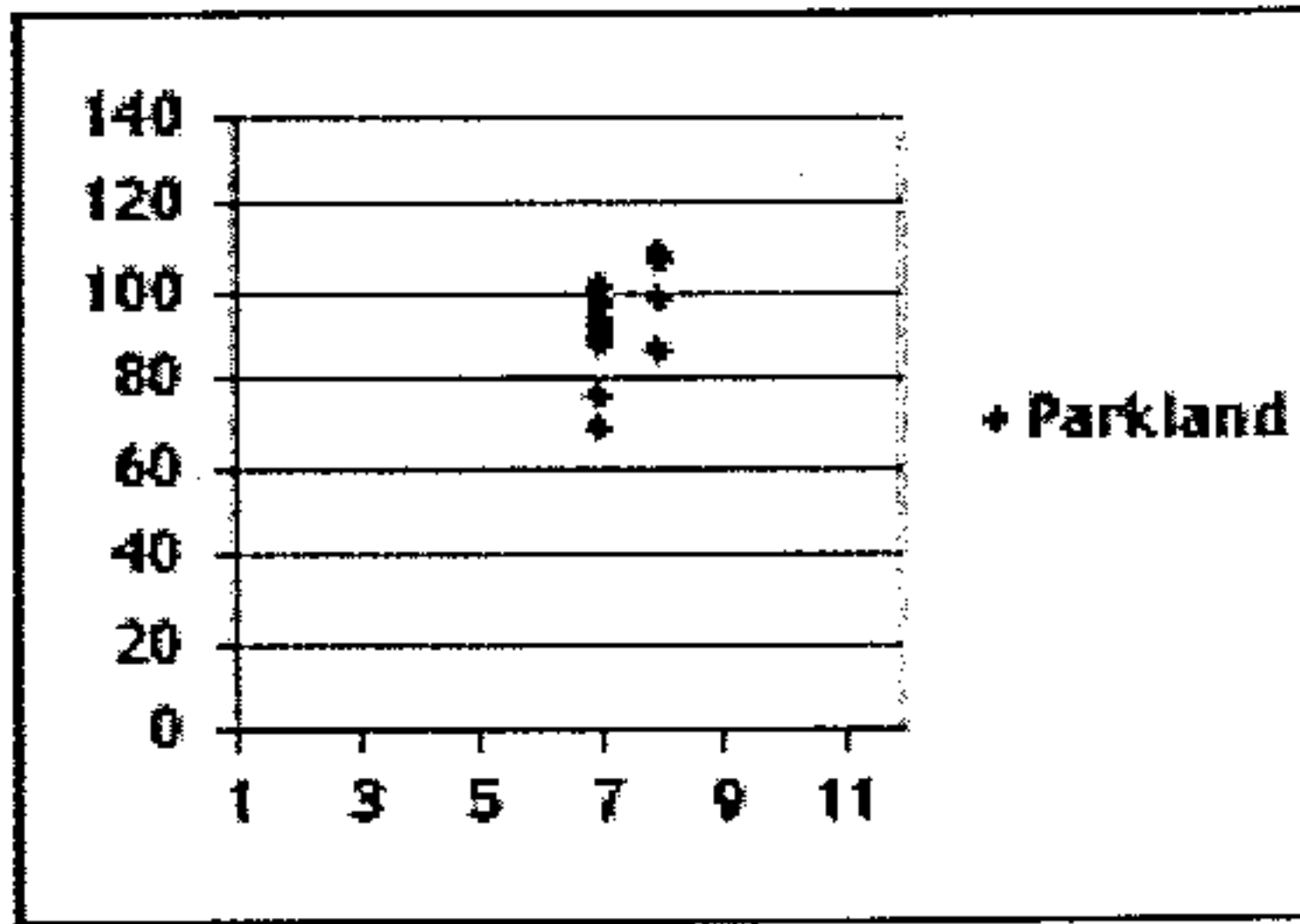
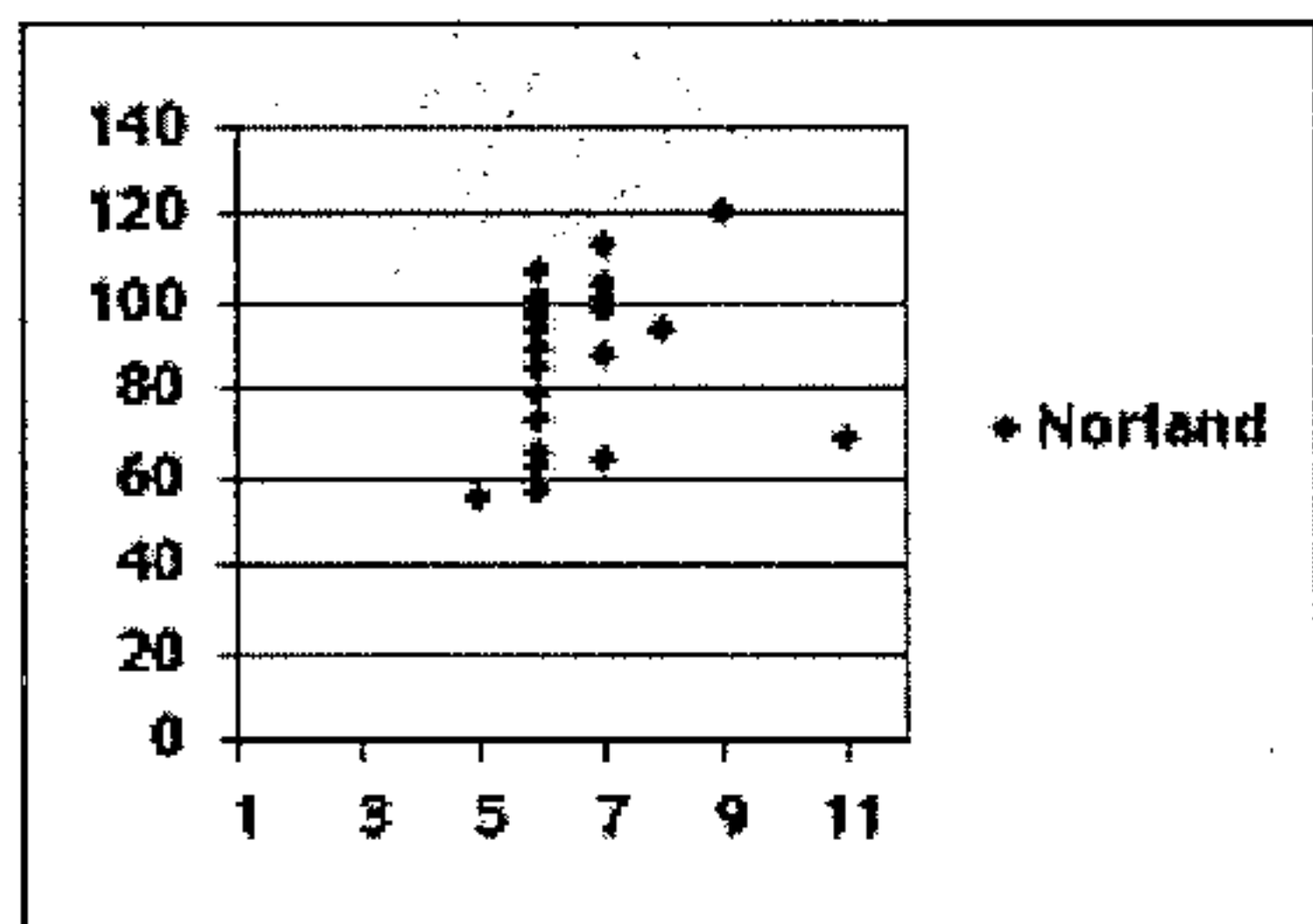
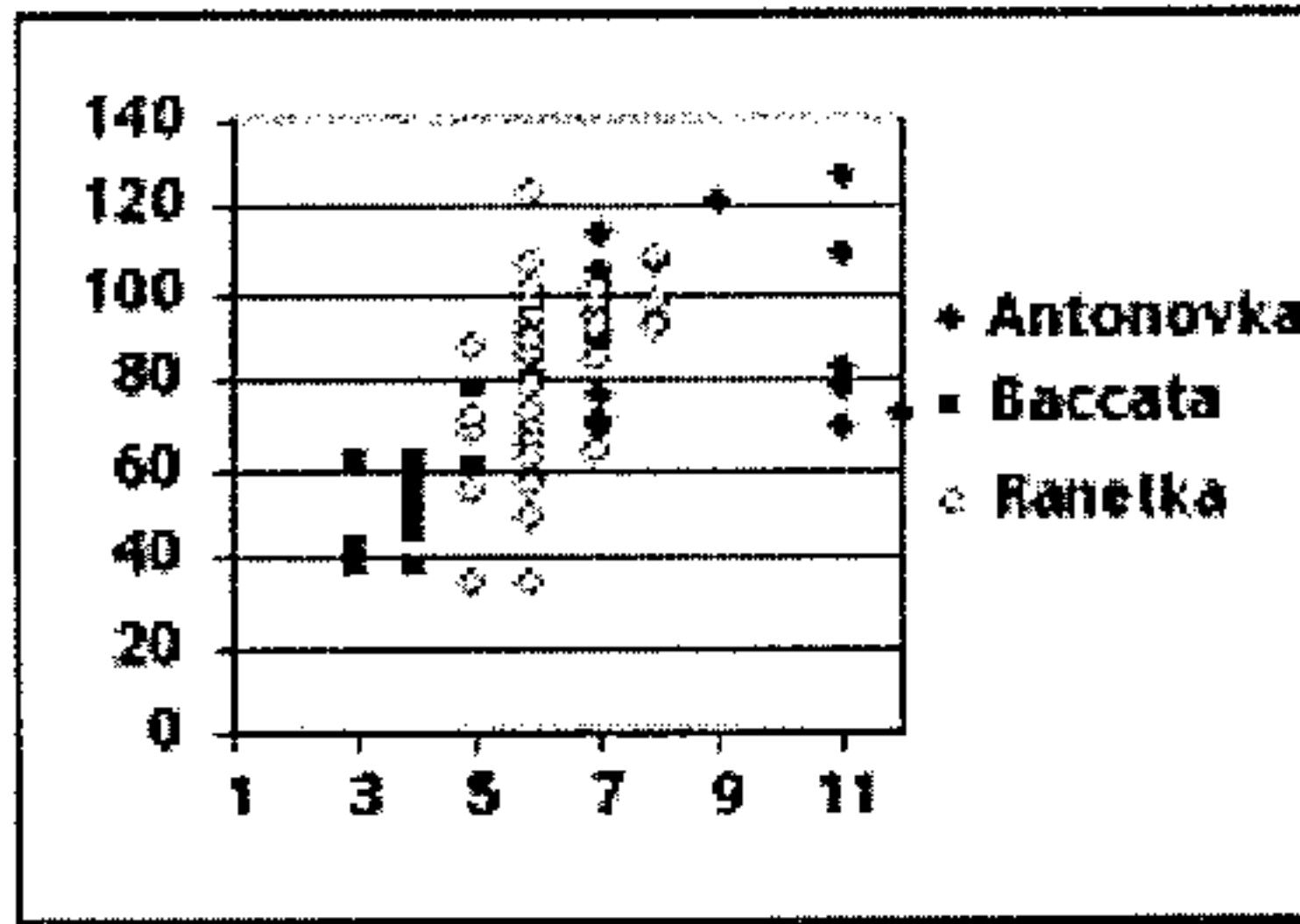
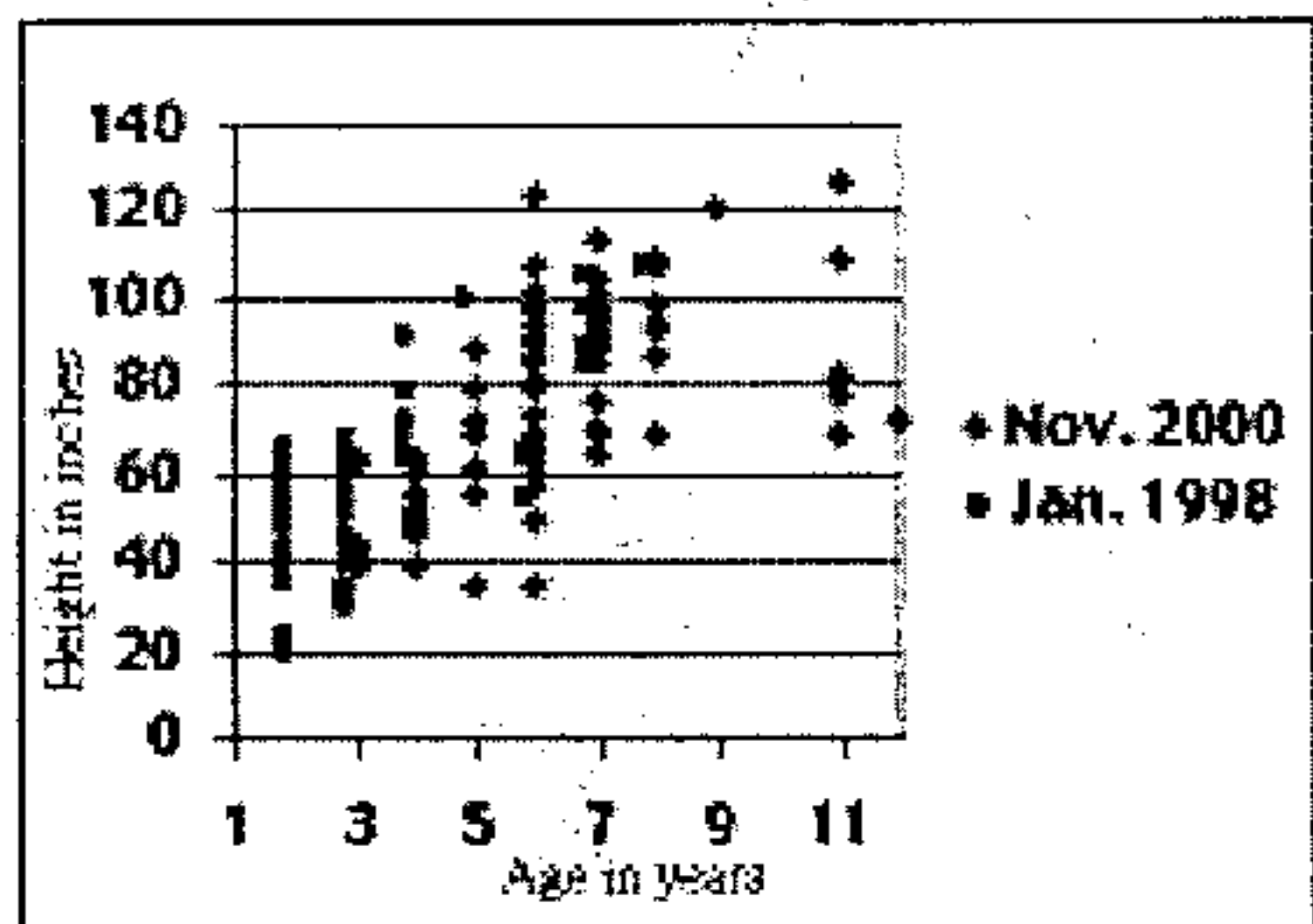
A second graph shows height versus age for trees plotted with a different symbol depending on whether they are on Antonovka, Baccata, or Ranetka rootstock. Because most of the oldest trees are on Antonovka and most of the youngest are on Baccata,, direct comparisons are not possible. Nonetheless, each of the three rootstocks seems to follow the same growth curve and there is no obvious difference between them.

The third and fourth graphs show just the Norlands and just the Parklands respectively. I had hoped that this would reveal something about the differences in growth habit between the two, but the data, when superimposed, essentially overlap.

It should eventually be possible to draw firmer conclusions about growth rates of the different rootstocks and the most common varieties. But these plots need more data, including information from other growers in Anchorage or the Mat Valley. If you have a

little spare time and would like to contribute, what I need is the following information. It would save me time and effort if you could provide your data in Excel (or equivalent) spreadsheet form with the following info in columns, and a separate row for each tree:

1. Variety
2. Rootstock
3. Height
4. Age in years (a tree grafted in Spring 1999 will have an age of 2 as of Dec. 2000, as it will have lived through two growing seasons).



Apple-tree growth curves for Peters Creek, Alaska



## Growing Pineapple Indoors

by TAMI SCHLIES

Has all this darkness got you down? Do you long for tropical sun, a little heat, maybe the smell of jasmine and piña coladas? Well, short of hopping a plane to the tropics, those of us with an inclination for fruit growing can try growing pineapples.

First, go to the grocery store and buy a fresh pineapple that is still fairly green. The leaves must not come off easily or else the fruit is too ripe for this project. Slice off the top of the fruit without damaging the leaves, leaving about a half inch of fruit attached. Cut away or scrape out the pulp below the leaves or else the base will rot before it has a chance to grow. Carefully peel some of the lower leaves from the base. You will see some small bumps and maybe even some roots which have started to grow beneath the leaves. Do not damage the bumps, as they are baby roots waiting to grow.

Transplant the top into *well drained* potting soil to cover the base of the lowest leaves along with those baby roots. Water it in, and then keep the soil moderately moist until it grows roots - do not over water! This may take two or three months, so be

patient. Put the plant in a spot with good, but not direct light, and keep the humidity high. It helps to put the whole pot and plant in a clear plastic bag loosely sealed at the top. If the base looks like it starts rotting, you will need to start over with a fresh pineapple. Once roots form, new leaves will begin growing at the top of the plant.

After growth begins, fertilize monthly with a balanced soluble fertilizer. It will do best with at least 6 hours of sunlight a day. Once again, be careful never to over water.

As soon as the plant has reached about 18 inches tall it is big enough to grow your very own baby pineapple! (It will not be full sized - that would require to plant to reach about 6 feet tall and 6 feet wide.) To start fruiting it will need a little coaxing from you. The best way to do this is to put the entire plant, pot and all, in a large, clear, plastic garbage bag with a couple of ripe apples for a couple of months. You will need to replace the apples a few times. The ethylene gas given off by the apples will encourage flowering and fruit. Within several months a flower spike with red buds will appear. The blooms will be purple, and soon after, a baby pineapple should form.

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## Meet a Member:

*Seymour Mills*

I first got serious about raising fruit trees in the spring of 1998 when I made an order from Bear Creek Nursery. I'm very disappointed to see them go out of business. I have also ordered from St. Lawrence, Fedco, and Oikes. I am experimenting with some oaks, silver maple, mulberries, walnuts, and hazelnuts. It's far too soon to know what I will be successful with. Last winter with no snow until nearly Christmas and still no snow to speak of this year

(November 30) creates a real test. I transplanted some trees at the beginning of October last year (1999). Some came out of pots and some were dug and replanted after growing for two years in my garden. I lost 25% over the winter.

In the fall I place everything in pots in a trench and fill dirt around them for the winter, then take them out in the spring. My first trees were set out in my garden in a 3 foot grid in typlar road fabric. Since then I plant new trees in black plastic plant bags and set these on top of black typlar. I leave

the soil down about 2 inches and fill the top with cut grass or weeds.

By using year old, partially composted manure/animal bedding and watering with pigeon manure tea, the earthworms do well. The few tiny worms in the soil fattened up and started really reproducing once I started using plenty of manure/bedding a few years ago. After the first year of a heavy application, cauliflower no longer died from root maggots. I still have a few root maggots in the roots, but the cauliflower produces heads and does fine. Much of the chemical nitrogen fertilizer will kill earthworms. One variety used to be advertised specifically to kill earthworms on golf courses. From what I've been reading the past two years, even the super phosphates can be deadly to worms.

I'm going to be planting more clover this spring. Sweet clover will be one I definitely plant because it has the longest tap roots to bring up minerals and convert them to an organic form. All of my area was once covered by glaciers, which ground up all varieties of rocks and left the mineral remains too deep for most plants to utilize.

Sweet clover brings minerals up to where other plants can use them. Studies of the Hunza people near India, who had long lifespans, used glacial water high in minerals for their agriculture. There is information other places that claim Alzheimer's is a mineral deficiency. I can't even find the word [Alzheimer's] in my large 1971 Webster Dictionary. Over 50 years ago there were warnings about the depletion of minerals in our soil. We are what we eat. If minerals are not in the proper form, they are not utilized by either plants or animals.

Many people worry about chemicals in their food from sprays, but how many consider the lack of nutrients in the soil beyond nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus? Or what is lost through pasteurization and homogenization of milk, cheese, & yogurt? French farmers are very upset about this for their cheese making. I'll continue to drink raw milk, thank you!

*Seymour lives in Sterling, Alaska, and raises goats and chickens along with his garden and orchard.*

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## Member to Member:

- If anyone knows of a very cheap deal on a used computer that is capable of the internet, please let me know.

Seymour Mills  
PO Box 51  
Sterling, AK 99672  
907-262-9289

- Fedco is offering three varieties of hops rated to zone 3 for anyone interested.
- We are starting to think about orchard tours this summer. Please contact Dan if you would be able to give us a tour of your garden or if you have a desire to tour a specific garden.

## Featured Fruit

### **Apple - *Malus domestica***

Apples are members of the rose family, or Rosaceae, and the genus *Malus*. The common wild apple of Europe and Asia is *M. pumila*. Other wild species are *M. sylvestris* (a wild crab), and *M. baccata*. The Western Crabapple, *M. fusca*, grows wild on the Kenai Peninsula (rare) and along the coast of Southeastern Alaska down to California. The science of apple growing is called pomology.

The apple probably originated in Central and Southwestern Asia. These early apples were likely small and astringent like wild apples or crabapples. The earliest writings of Egypt, Babylon, and China mention the apple. Charred apples have been found in prehistoric dwellings in Switzerland. Ancient writers such as Cato, Varo, Pliny and Palladius mentioned 26 different varieties of apples. Apples were introduced to England during the Roman invasions in the first century BC.

Crabapples grew here in America before the pilgrims arrived, but the fruit was not very edible. The Massachusetts Bay Colony requested seeds and cuttings from England, which were brought over on later voyages of the Mayflower. John Chapman, of Massachusetts, grew famous for planting trees throughout Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois and became known as "Johnny Appleseed."

Apples can be grown farther north than most other fruits because they blossom late in spring, reducing the likelihood of frost damage. It takes 50 leaves to produce enough energy to grow one apple. Apple trees take four to five years to produce their first fruit, and reach maximum productivity between 10 and 15 years of age. Apple trees can reproduce by seeds, but domestic propagation is usually done by grafting, generally onto wild or propagated rootstock.

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