

# ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS NEWSLETTER

Fall 2001

Volume 16, Number 3

President: **Dan Elliot**, HC31 Box 5196, Wasilla, AK 99654 ph 376-5196

Vice President: **Kevin Irving**, 2000 Douglas Drive, Wasilla, AK 99654

Treasurer: **Debbie Hinchey**, 1474 Virginia Court, Anchorage, AK 99501 ph 278-2814

Board Members at Large: **Dwight Bradley**, 22008 Voyles Blvd, Chugiak, AK 99567 ph 688-1268

**Sally Karabelnikoff** 7435 Old Harbor Ave, Anchorage, AK 99504 ph 333-8237

Editor: **Tami Schlies**, P.O. Box 672255, Chugiak, AK 99567 ph 688-5711 Email [schlies@gci.net](mailto:schlies@gci.net)

Membership information and dues payments contact Debbie Hinchey

## Association News

It is time for the newsletter once again, and I realize how little I have from our members to put in it. This newsletter is a great way for us to keep in touch with the innovations and progress of others who share our interests and challenges as we grow fruit in the High North. Even a single paragraph on how a tree or plant or variety did in your yard this year is of interest to our readers, and if you feel you are not a good writer, do it anyway – it is my job to edit, and I promise to make you sound good! Please take a moment right now, while you are thinking of it, to jot something down and send it to me. We need recipes, orchard reports, book and product reviews, even questions that might be answered by other members! And remember, there are no stupid questions.

I also want to thank everyone who volunteered their time and property for our orchard tours this summer - Bushes Bunches, Northern Fruit, Mr. Lawrence Clark, Jackson Gardens, Mr. Seymour Mills, Mr. Tom Marshall, and Mr. Paul Lariviere (if I missed anyone, please forgive me.) I could not make it to all of them, but I am

sure the ones I missed were as informative and interesting as the ones I attended.

This issue includes a rough copy of our member directory for the year 2001. Please look over and update your information so you will be current in the official directory in the next newsletter. You can email me any corrections at [schlies@gci.net](mailto:schlies@gci.net) or mail it to me at PO Box 672255, Chugiak, AK 99567.

Our next get together will be the **ANNUAL APPLE TASTING** at Dwight Bradley's at 7 PM on Thursday, September 20<sup>th</sup>. He will give an orchard tour prior to this, at 6:30 PM, but no earlier, please. Come taste the varieties grown around the state and bring something of your own if you'd like. If you cook something or make a beverage, bring the recipe, too, for me to put in the newsletter, since everyone always asks! To get there, take the Glenn Highway to the Peter's Creek Exit and go west. Continue straight through the four way stop down Voyles Blvd. until where the road ends. Continue straight onto the dirt driveway, 22008 Voyles Blvd. Dwight's place is at the end of the driveway. For more information contact Dan Elliot at 376-5196 or Tami Schlies at 688-5711 or [schlies@gci.net](mailto:schlies@gci.net).

reprinted with permission from **Journal Of Pesticide Reform**/ Spring 1994 • Vol.14, No.1  
Northwest Coalition For Alternatives To  
Pesticides/NCAP P.O. Box 1393, Eugene, Oregon  
97440 / (5 41)3 4 4 -5 0 4 4 38

## **Alternatives:**

# **LEAST TOXIC APHID MANAGEMENT**

*By BECKY LONG*

Every spring, aphids are one of the first pests to arrive in the yard and garden. Rarely noticed when numbers of aphids are small, larger aphid colonies can damage plants.

However, it is important to realize that most plants can tolerate modest aphid infestations and that aphids are always present at some level in all garden environments. A combination of physical and biological controls can help keep the aphid population in your yard and garden at tolerable levels.

### **Life Cycle and Biology**

There are over 4,000 species of aphids. Appearance varies, but all aphids are small (1/8 inch long) insects with soft bodies and mouths adapted for sucking the nutrient-rich juice out of plant tissue. Most feed on only one kind of plant or a few closely related species, but around 10 percent feed on a variety of different plants. So aphids spotted on your rose bush will not necessarily spread and move to your cabbage patch. 1

Many aphid species have a remarkable life cycle that enables them to reproduce rapidly. In the fall, female aphids lay eggs in the protected cracks and crevices of plants and trees. In the spring just as plants are sprouting new growth, the overwintered eggs hatch. Incredibly, all the hatching aphids are females that without mating give live birth to daughters who in turn are born ready to give live birth to more daughters. This reproductive process continues

throughout the growing season. For some greenhouse species, no male aphids have ever been identified! But most outdoor species complete the life cycle at the end of the growing season by producing males and egg bearing females that mate and lay eggs to over-winter. 1,2

### **Monitoring and Detection**

Aphid populations vary year to year and plant to plant so regular inspection is an important step in determining if you have an escalating aphid problem. Check for aphids on the undersides of leaves and on new growth. Moderate aphid populations usually don't cause noticeable damage.

Aphids feed by sucking the sweet syrupy sap from plants. Some aphids can spread plant diseases. Yellowing, leaf curl, puckering, leaf galls, distortion of new growth and weakened plants may all be signs of a large aphid infestation.

Honeydew, black mold and ants are also indicators of a significant aphid infestation. Ingesting more sap than they can absorb, aphids excrete the excess in the form of honeydew.

Harmless but messy, honeydew forms a sticky coating on leaves and fruit and an unattractive black, sooty mold may develop. Honeydew from tree feeding aphids may fall on sidewalks and cars creating a sticky nuisance. Ants are attracted to honeydew and sometimes protect and care for aphid colonies in order to maintain the honeydew supply. 3

### **Biological Controls and Natural Enemies**

Aphids have many natural enemies including lady beetles, green and brown lacewings (also known as "aphid lions"), spiders, various flies, mini-wasps, and aphid midges. In most garden environments, these natural enemies keep the aphid population under control. Lady beetles, in both the adult and larval stages, eat around 50 aphids a



day.<sup>4</sup> However, beneficial insects don't appear until there is an adequate food supply, in other words plenty of aphids and other tasty prey. So there may be times, especially in the spring when beneficial populations are too small to keep aphid populations from increasing. Beneficial insects can be attracted to gardens by planting a variety of flowering plants. Parsley, carrots, fennel, caraway, coriander, daisies, sunflowers, yarrow, artemisia, marigolds, zinnias, and asters are all especially attractive to beneficial insects.<sup>4</sup> A few aphid infested weeds can also serve as an attractive, interim food supply for beneficial insects in the early spring. Finally beneficial insects can be purchased and released into garden environments, but released predators are mobile and do not necessarily stay in your garden.<sup>1</sup>

### Physical Controls

Natural biological control of aphids is achievable, but low to moderate aphid populations must be tolerated especially early in the season when numbers of beneficial insects lag behind aphid populations. While waiting for beneficial insects to become abundant, there are a number of physical controls that will reduce aphid populations.

- **Plant wisely:** Avoid aphid problems by not choosing plant varieties that attract aphids such as birch or spruce trees. If you must have aphid attractive plants or trees, place them where aphid presence and honeydew production won't become an unbearable nuisance.<sup>4,5</sup>

- **Maintain plant health:** Healthy plants are most resistant to pest problems. Stressed or unhealthy plants act as magnets to pest populations.<sup>5</sup>

- **Water washing:** Aphids can be washed off plants with a strong stream of water. Re-peat every three to four days until beneficial insects control aphid populations. Washing

early in the day so the plant can dry off before evening reduces the risk of fungal disease.<sup>1</sup>

- **Wipe, clip or prune:** Use cloth gloves to wipe small aphid colonies off leaves or buds. Infested parts of plants can be pinched off or pruned. Dispose of these clippings in hot compost or in soapy water.<sup>1,6</sup>

- **Control nitrogen levels:** Aphids reproduce more rapidly on plants with high nitrogen levels. Instead of highly soluble nitrogen fertilizers, use composted or urea-based fertilizers that release moderate levels of nitrogen over time.<sup>1,6</sup>

- **Use row covers:** For garden beds, finely woven row cover materials are available at garden centers. These covers are an effective barrier to insects, but light, air, and water easily penetrate for good plant growth.<sup>6</sup>

- **Control ants:** To maintain continuing supplies of aphid honeydew, an ant delicacy, certain ant species protect aphids by killing their natural enemies. Apply sticky barriers, available at garden stores, to the stems or trunks of plants to prevent ant access.<sup>1,6</sup>

- **Insecticidal soap:** If a regular water wash doesn't work, adding soap or detergent can help dislodge aphids. The fatty acids in soaps can also serve as an insecticide, killing aphids on contact. (Test your soap on a small part of the plant before washing the entire plant.)

### Summary

Chemical pesticides are often ineffective in aphid management because they temporarily reduce aphid populations while decimating beneficial insect populations. However, a combination of physical and biological controls can effectively keep the aphid population in your yard and garden at tolerable levels.

## References

1. Olkowski, W., S. Daar, and H. Olkowski. 1991. Common-sense pest control: Least-toxic solutions for your home, garden, pets and community. Newtown, CT: Taunton Press.
2. Borror, D., D. DeLong, and C. Triplehorn. 1976. An introduction to the study of insects. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
3. Gilkeson, L. 1992. Aphids: Safe and sensible pest control. Victoria, BC Ministry of Environment, Land and Parks. Pesticide Management Branch. (June.)

## APHIDS ON HOUSEPLANTS

The aphids on your houseplants are probably the same species found in your yard and garden. The most common indoor aphid and the most difficult to control is the green peach aphid which comes in several colors: pale green, yellow, and pink. Indoor aphids have an extremely high reproductive rate since the male fertilization and egg laying parts of the life cycle are unnecessary. Methods for controlling aphids indoors are similar to those used outdoors. 1

- Inspect new plants for pests before bringing them home.
- Quarantine new plants and aphid infested plants for several weeks in a separate room. Treat aphid infested plants during this isolation period.
- Screen windows to prevent aphid entry from outside.
- Prune and pinch off plant pieces with aphids.
- In warm weather, take aphid infested plants outdoors and wash with a strong stream of water.
- Spot treat plants with spray of soapy water. (Test your soap on a small section of the plant first.)

4. Thurston County Local Hazardous Waste Program. Aphids: A guide to aphid control for the earth-friendly gardener. A pamphlet in Thurston County's "Common Sense Gardening" series.
5. Johnson, D., 1990. Aphids: Safe and successful control. Seattle, WA: Washington Toxics Coalition.
6. Daar, S. and H. Olkowski. 1992. Least-toxic ways to control aphids. Common Sense Pest Control 8(2):14-1

- Use a slow release fertilizer to maintain slow but steady plant growth. Divide recommended fertilization doses into smaller more frequent doses. For example, break a monthly amount into quarters and fertilize weekly.
- For true devotees of beneficial insects, indoor releases are an effective means of controlling indoor aphids. Lady beetles, lacewings and aphid-eating gall midges are good candidates for indoor control.
- Researchers have found that commercial brands of vegetable cooking oil (coconut, corn, peanut, safflower, soybean, and sunflower) mixed with common liquid dishwashing detergent makes an effective and economical solution that kills aphids and other common insect pests. Mix one tablespoon dishwashing detergent to one cup oil to make the basic stock. Add 1 to 2 1/2 teaspoons of this concentrate to one cup water, then spray on plants. This solution may injure some plants so test a small part of the plant first. 2

1. Olkowski, W., S. Daar, and H. Olkowski. 1991. Common-sense pest control: Least-toxic solutions for your home, garden, pets and community. Newtown, CT: Taunton Press.
2. Grossman, J., 1990. Horticultural oils: New summer uses on ornamental plant pests. The IPM Practitioner 8(8):1-10



# Chickweed As Mulch

by SEYMOUR MILLS

I know everyone hates chickweed but I am going to be the devil's advocate. I believe that mulch is useful even with our cold soil if we experiment different ways of using it.

I have plenty of chickweed and I have been using it to good advantage. I've always heard that any small piece of it will resprout and grow. I haven't found this to be true when I use it right. I usually gather it when it is tall and before it seeds, without the roots, and take handfuls and twist it into short pieces and cover the dirt in all my pots one to two inches deep. This retains the moisture from sun and wind drying and the native earthworms love it. I add more whenever I weed. Chickweed has so much water that it rots very easily. I used grass clippings once from the local Post Office but I got a terrible dandelion problem and they don't have the moisture to rot as well.

I also use chickweed to create planting soil. I cut it off just under the surface with a shovel or hoe, and then turn it upside down in a pile. Add a little extra dirt if necessary, which adds microbes to activate the compost quicker, and cover the top with a layer of dirt. If anything starts to grow, just add to the pile or cover with a little dirt. By next year at the same time it is almost all rotted. When I am potting anything I just add it to my dirt. Sometimes I create small piles wherever it is a problem and just leave them till I till next time. It makes excellent green manure quicker than anything else I have found. Humus is far more important than anything else I can do for my soil, and I am always needing it when I am potting. Whenever I repot with this I always get new growth quickly.

I like Typlar on the ground around my trees, and it definitely increases growth in young plants, but I also want to try using a mulch without this Typlar when my trees and

bushes get a bit bigger. On my raspberries and currants every spring I lay down a good layer of year old manure/bedding which prevents weeds, retains the moisture and feeds the plants. I want to try doing this with my trees in late September / early October and then water very good. One of the best ways to warm the soil and retain moisture is to increase organic matter. The looser the soil the easier it is to warm. Wet clay is very cold. It may be necessary to cover with screen or hardware cloth if there is a vole problem because they love to live in big piles at least. Getting two cats has stopped my vole problem it appears. Voles were terrible before I got them in spring 2000. I don't want to use any kind of poisons around the food we or our animals eat.

**Small Farmers Journal** reprinted articles from Britain in the 1940's and 50's that say that they used chickweed as an early pasture crop before planting other things. In the original plot I used to temporarily plant my trees, I planted oats and barley in an area to let our goats and sheep eat. When this and the chickweed got big and before the chickweed reseeded I tilled it in. I did this twice in one summer. It made very light soil. These reprints spoke of using mown clover and alfalfa, high nitrogen sources, as a mulch for the only fertilizer for fruit trees. Clover will convert inorganic minerals in the soil into an organic form also, which other plants can then use. Our old glacial subsoil is full of minerals. Sweet Clover and White Clover work excellently for this. I believe we can get all the minerals we need if we can get Sweet Clover to grow down into our subsoil. Alsike Clover grows excellently in roadside gravel so it is converting minerals there. What if we use it for mulch or compost it to add to our soil? We will get both nitrogen and minerals.

A very good set of books were written by Louis Bromfield. They have been reprinted. The two I can think of now were **Malabar**

**Farm and Pleasant Valley.** He bought up several farms for a total of about 1000 acres in the 1940's. These farms were in low production from too much chemical fertilizer and depleted humus. He rebuilt them into excellent production using green manure, animal manure, pasture and rotation

farming. He even grew alfalfa when no one else in the area could because of the light soil he developed which prevented the frost from breaking off the tap roots. White, Red and Sweet clover were the important soil builders on his farm. This farm still exists today as an example.

---

## Orchard Report

Peter's Creek

August 30, 2001

by TAMI SCHLIES

It is hard to believe that summer is almost over already. It has not felt cold enough to be fall yet, but the trees have that bronzy sheen that speaks of the golden days of autumn just around the corner. Perhaps milder days will give me the incentive to clean up the garden a little better than usual this year.

The summer here on the Schlies property went well, with a bumper crop of strawberries even through the weedy grass I accidentally allowed to take over. I plan on moving the strawberry beds this fall to new, 100% organic beds.

Tomatoes also did well, both in and out of the greenhouse. The plants outside ripen about 2 weeks later for each variety, but the plants in the greenhouse have just about succumbed to gray mold by now, even with additional ventilation and an extra fan. The tomatoes outside are almost untouched by the fungus. I grew Johnny's 361, Bellstar paste, Early Temptation, Stupice, and Milano plum this year. Stupice and Milano are my all time favorites, but I try new varieties every year. Johnny's 361 produced large fruit that ripened even outside, and the flavor was decent, so I shall try it again next

year. The Bellstar produced as well as the Milano, but the flavor is not quite as good. I was not impressed with the Early Temptation.

This year I did find a broccoli, Burpee's Green Goliath, that did amazingly well, yielding huge, tightly budded green heads, and 3 inch side shoots afterward. I let it go too long, I thought, and went back out to check, expecting the heads to have opened and maybe even begun breaking bud, but the heads had only grown larger and remained tight. Great for the freezer! I also used predatory nematodes this year the second week in May and had zero trouble with root maggots.

I also tried King Richard Lecks, Ventura celery, Precocious sweet corn, Goldmarie pole beans, and Northern Pickling cukes outside. The only one I was not impressed with was the cukes, due to the failure of pollination. I have grown Aria cucumbers outside for years and love them for fresh eating (I grew this variety in the greenhouse this year, since it is parthenocarpic and warps if pollinated by other cukes), but wanted to try picklers this year.

My apple trees did fine this summer. I pruned to a central leader and 3 or 4 side branches and mulched the ones in the ground with year old chicken litter to keep the grass away. I got 2 plus feet of growth and two apples on these 2 year old trees.



This was their first year in the ground. I still have a lot of trees from the grafting workshop in 2000 in pots which I will probably plant this fall. One of them, the Noran, produced an apple this year (I couldn't resist letting it go!) Actually, my Trailman produced as well, but my 5 year old was playing near the pots and fell on it this summer, snapping it off a half inch above the graft. I thought it was a goner for sure, but kept the rootstock buds pinched off, and it sprouted from that tiny bit of scion, putting on 6 or 8 inches. It just goes to show that you should never give up on these hardy trees.

I also acquired 2 Silken apple trees from Dan this year, but they are on MM111 rootstock, not likely to be hardy up here. I planted one of them deep in a huge pot and

used rooting hormone, hoping it would develop it's own roots, but am doubtful of my success. The Silkens grew as well as everything else in pots this summer, and if nothing else I should get some scion wood off of them this spring before they realize they have no roots and are dead.

My Evans cherries are also still in pots, but did not put on nearly the growth of the apple trees. The branches are spindly and only about 6 inches on most of them. I pruned them this spring to encourage upward growth instead of the bushes they were trying to be, so maybe I set them back. Each tree is only a little over two feet tall. Hopefully getting them into the ground in the next few weeks will be good for them come next year.

---

## **Hansen Bush Cherry Sets Fruit with Manure Tea**

*by SEYMOUR MILLS*

At the orchard tour at my place someone said that Hansen Bush Cherry did not fruit in Anchorage. Guess what? Mine have fruit on them this year. They are a tear drop shape. I have had one 4 or 5 years and another 2 or 3 years. Each has flowered every year but weren't coordinated. This year I set them touching each other and each have a number of fruit. Somewhere I read that it takes 2 or more plants. I am going to get 3 or 4 more and plant close enough to touch in a double row or group.

I only have about a dozen fruit for the first time on my Hansen Bush Cherry and they are still green and hard, so I will have to wait and see about ripening. I think the main problem I have is that the plants are

still in pots, and they are root bound. I had 2 American, 1 York and 1 Nova Elderberry in pots for at least 3 years, and they only flowered very late and never fruited. This year I repotted with good rich manure compost and they really grew and have unripe fruit on several flower heads. I feel that if I had repotted earlier this year or if they were in the ground they would have fruited earlier. This is probably the problem with the Hansen Bush Cherry, too, because they were stressed the blossoms didn't fruit. A consequence of not having enough time to prepare a permanent planting spot!

I watered better this year, by setting each pot in a large container of water to soak and using a good strong pigeon manure tea. I think this is probably why the Hansen blossoms set fruit this year, even though they are stressed. I strongly believe in manure compost and tea. The tea works fast, and the compost lasts a long time. The

manure tea really made good growth this year for me for both my trees and vegetables. I used pigeon manure tea only twice in May on my trees. On the vegetables I dug in last years sheep and goat manure/bedding before planting into my pick-up tire planters the first of June, then watered twice in July with pigeon manure tea. I will use it earlier next year. The tea

made them really jump. Over in the Middle East they keep pigeons just for the fertilizer. In the book **The Pigeon** by Levy he tells how in the early part of this century, when they were building their squab production facility in South Carolina, they paid for all of the building additions by selling pigeon manure primarily to Florists, who preferred pigeon manure for fertilizer.

---

## Member to Member:

➤ Val Glooschenko grew Tri-Star strawberries this year and was very pleased with the yield and runner set. She recommends this variety to anyone seeking strawberries...

➤ Tom Marshall harvested 32 pounds of plums off of his Opal plum tree this fall. Way to go, Tom!

---

## Treasurer Wanted

Debbie has been our Treasurer for four years and is ready to pass the books on to another. Ideally this would be someone that is able to come to most meetings and be at the grafting workshop in early April.

The Treasurer is responsible for handling all memberships as they dribble in throughout out the year, work with the newsletter editor to maintain current membership rosters, handle the finances dealing with the ordering and selling of rootstock for the grafting workshop, and other financial matters as they develop. There are annual reports to fill out for the State of Alaska and the IRS, but the hardest part about that is remembering to do it. (Previous reports are in the Treasurers books to look at.)

The checking account is currently in QuickBooks format. If you have Quicken, it

will not transfer. Debbie can maintain the books to the end of 2001 and the transition to another accounting system will be fine.

The names, addresses, etc. are in Excel. This transfers easily to most spreadsheet programs. If you have e-mail, this is a great way to transfer information with Tami, the newsletter editor.

Would everyone interested in this position please contact Debbie (by e-mail or letter) and/or Dan Elliott (by letter). This is an elected position, so there are some technicalities like an election, but being conscientious, interested, and willing count for a lot.

- Debbie ([dhinchey@alaska.com](mailto:dhinchey@alaska.com) or 1474 Virginia Court, Anch, AK 99501-4928)
- Dan HC31 Box 5196, Wasilla, AK 99654 ph 376-5196