

ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2005

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From the Editor

We have some exciting new things happening! In January I arranged with the Anchorage Daily News to list our meeting information in the Community Datebook. We are also now registered with the Community News Online. Community News is a free site for dedicated use by the non-profit community throughout the state of Alaska. Our group name is: Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers. Our group address is:

<http://communitynews.adn.com/AlaskaPioneerFruitGrowers>

The number of members has grown grown at least 200% since I started doing the newsletter and meeting notices with color photos. That has brought the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter up considerably. Since we now have our information posted on line through the Anchorage Daily News, I am asking all members to please update your membership information on the enclosed form with your correct email address, if you have one and are willing to receive your meeting notifications and newsletters on line.

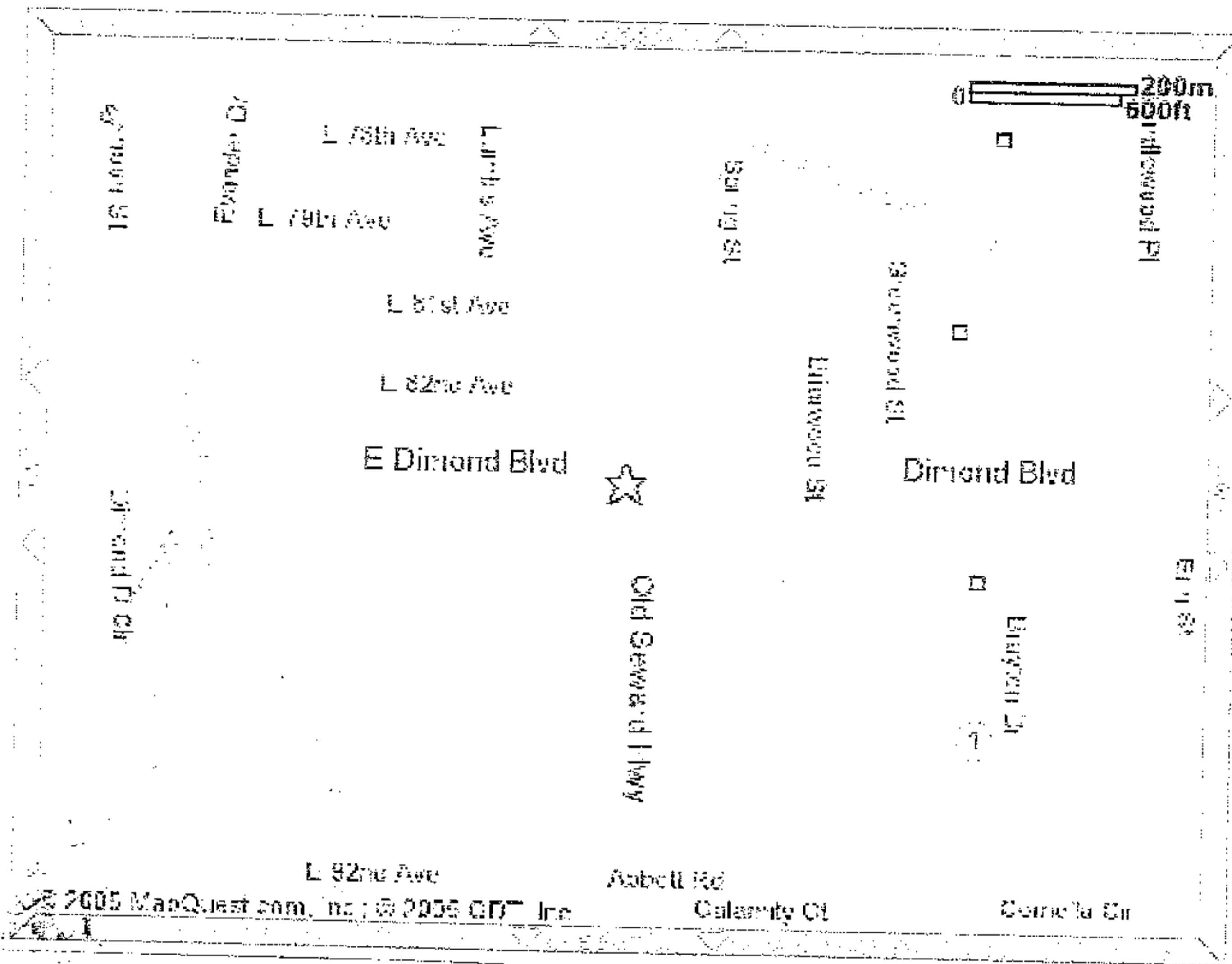
We have also discussed printing a directory of members with names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, the crops they grow and perhaps a photo of the member and their prized fruit. Members have expressed interest in having such a directory so that if they were traveling, they might look up other members in the area to visit and gain new information. A color picture cataloging of each member's varieties along with the above information is also an idea for down the road.

We are asking members if they would be interested in sitting at a table in the Sears Mall to give out information on the Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers and fruit growing in Alaska on Garden Day, April 16th from 9am-6pm. If you are interested please give Paul a call.

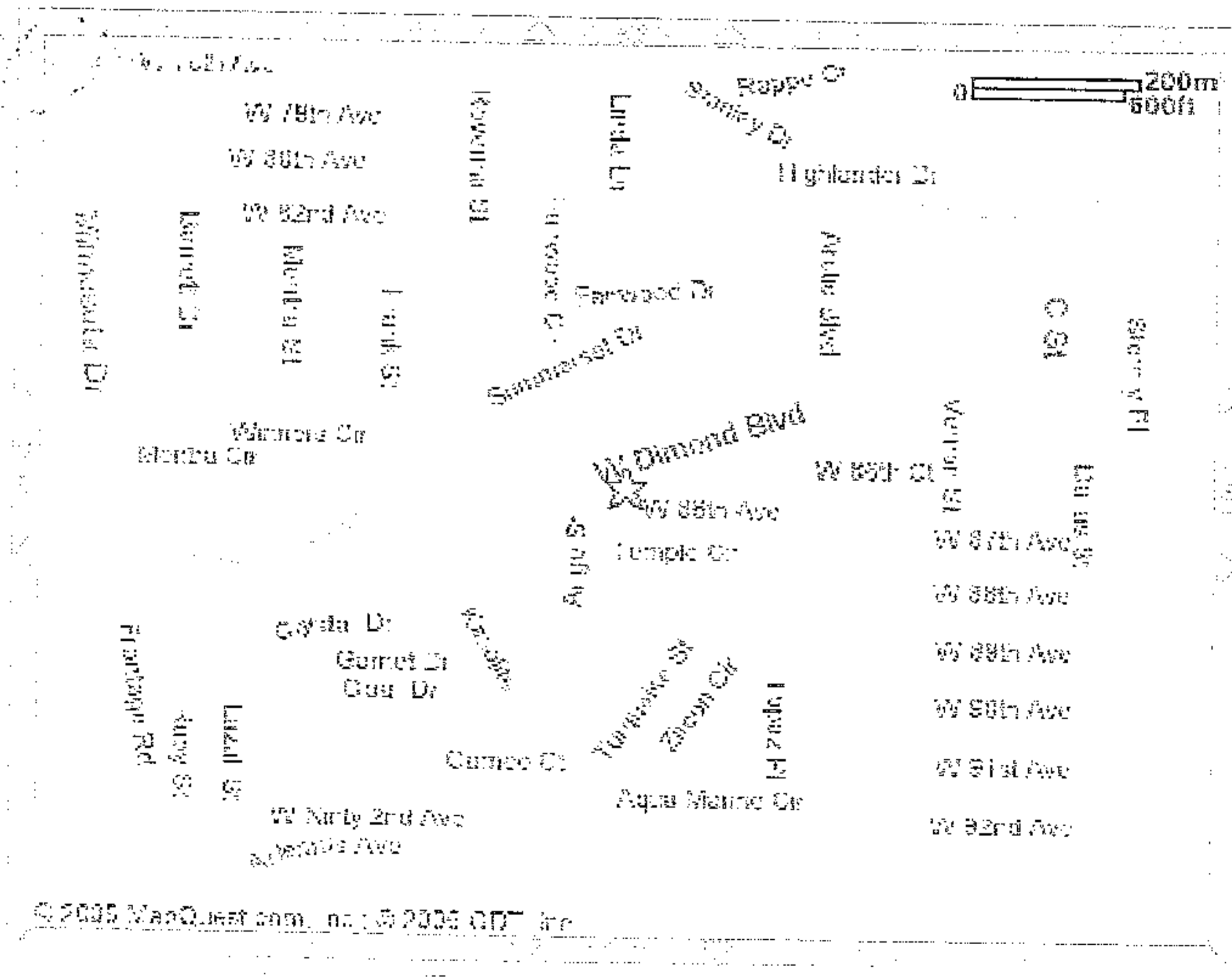
Alaska Mill and Feed also hosts member representatives to give out club information, answer questions and give demonstrations. If you are interested in spending an hour or so, again give Paul a call. Kevin Irvin said he was surprised to be given a gift certificate after representing the club once.

Meetings

Saturday March 19th., 1pm, Bob Boyer's greenhouse
End of E 81st Ave off Old Seward Hwy
Pruning demonstration, limited parking, carpool if possible
Board Meeting afterward



Saturday April 16th., 1pm, Dimond Green House
1050 W Dimond Blvd
Grafting Workshop



NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Degree Days in Growing Fruit

Figuring degree days is based on fifty degrees Fahrenheit in growing some fruit, that is American grapes. After having achieved fifty degrees you add the high and low temperatures for the day and then divide by two. You then subtract fifty degrees; any degrees remaining is your degree day. For example on May first 2004 the high was sixty one degrees, the low was forty six degrees. You add $61 + 46 = 107$ divided by two equals 53.5; you then subtract fifty degrees. When your base is $53.5 - 50 = 3.5$ for the degree day of May first. For Baltic grapes forty four to forty six degrees can be used as a base.

Following are degree days computed for May through September 2004:

45 degree days

May	161
June	385
July	535
August	510
September	46

1637 degree days

50 degree days

May	47
June	237
July	380
August	335
September	20

1019 degree days

These figures are from the airport temperatures. If you have a protected area, that is a south facing wall or fence that is protected from north and west winds, your degree days would increase.

Also we gain by having longer days which would add to the degree days. If one can encourage earlier bud break, that is watering with warm water to warm up the roots and covering the roots and vines from late frost, you have a jump start on your vine so that it can ripen fruit earlier because you don't get many heat units in September and your vine shuts down for winter.

Red halo test can help determine maturity of apples

By Christine Morris
Assistant Editor

The Red Halo Apple Maturity Predictor (RHAMP) can be an effective tool to determine the ripeness of apples.

In the weeks prior to harvest, growers can wound a set of fruit on trees for consecutive weeks and track the intensity of the red halo, or ring, that will form around the wound. The halo forms by the accumulation of anthocyanins in neighboring cells as a result of a wound. The intensity of the color of the halo lessens as the apple develops and eventually disappears when it reaches maturity, said Randy Beaudry, horticulture professor at Michigan State University (MSU). If a week later the grower doesn't see a halo from the previous week's wounded apples, the fruit should be ready

to be harvested, Beaudry said.

The grower can make the wound with an object such as a nail or a bolt, and it doesn't matter whether the wound is a puncture wound or a bruise.

RHAMP is easiest to perform on green apples because of the contrasting colors, Beaudry said. It can still be used on red

apples, but there is some extra effort to make.

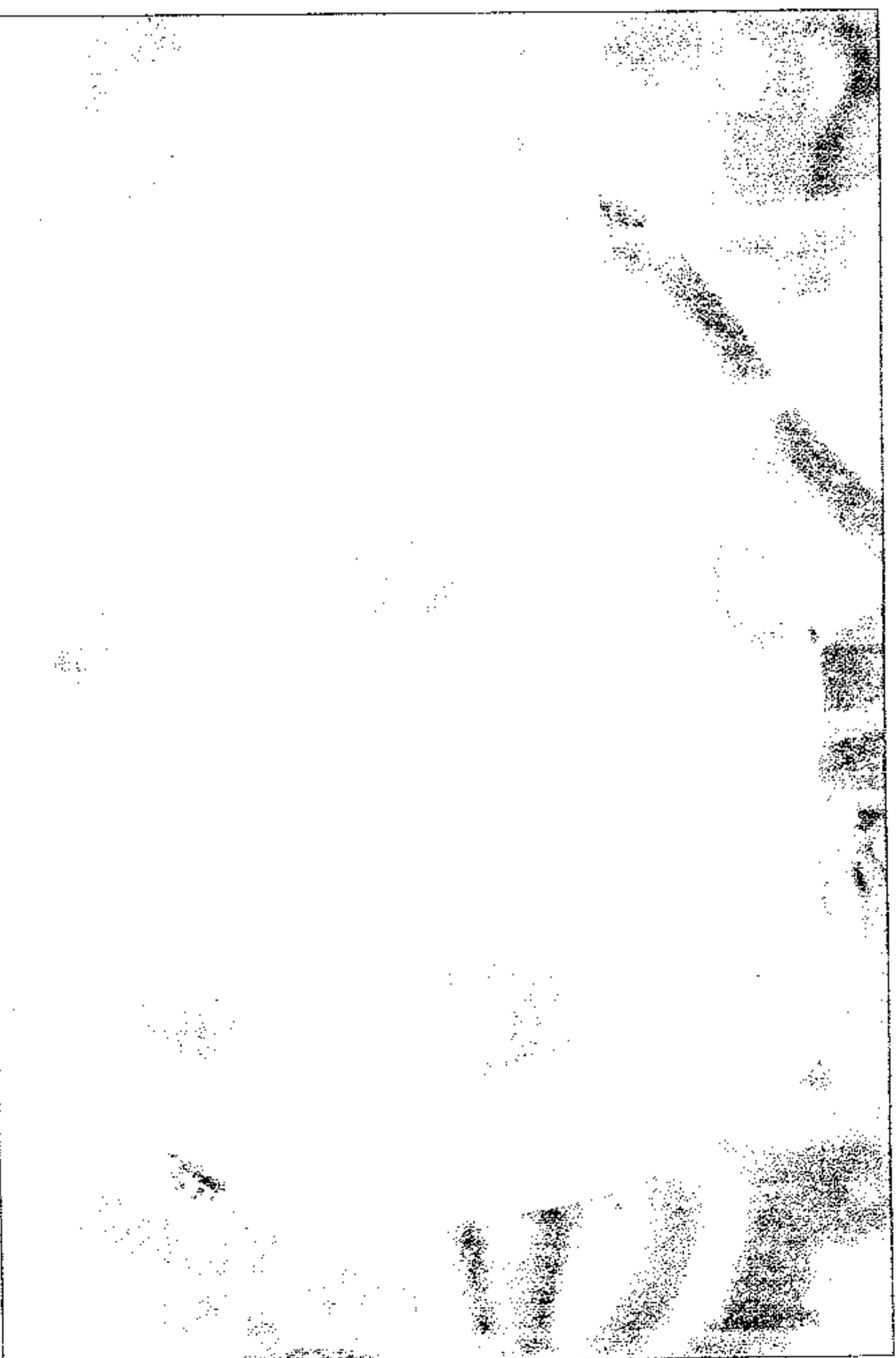
If growers place a piece of electrical tape on the apples, they want to test

"If you are going to store fruit, you have to hit that maturation point right on the button."

-Randy Beaudry

before they develop color, it will keep the apple from developing color as the apples mature, Beaudry said. Then when it's time to start testing the apples, a wound can be made right over the tape. A week later the tape can be removed, and a red halo will form with an intensity determined by the ripening progress.

RHAMP is most appropriate for grow-



Red halos, like the ones seen on this apple, can help determine apple maturity.

ers who are really interested in controlling the quality of fruit going into storage, Beaudry said.

"If you are going to store fruit, you have to hit that maturation point right on the button," he said.

RHAMP is not as important for growers who sell only at a fresh market because there is such a short window.

There are some years where there will be poor color and the apples develop slowly, Beaudry said. If there is a year that

maturation and color development don't match up, growers should not just rely on RHAMP to determine ripeness.

There are other maturity indices, including starch and apple firmness testing that should be done regularly, Beaudry said. There also is an apple maturity program at MSU, and growers should pay attention to those reports.

But overall, Beaudry said using RHAMP "is a really elegant solution for a fairly sophisticated physiological change."

Book Review

By Tami Schlies

Biological Time by Bernie Taylor is not a gardening book. I originally picked up the book because I was interested in how the phases of the moon affect the salmon migration in the Kenai River. I discovered much to my pleasure that the author also addresses a few gardening issues.

For the last two years I have been "gardening by the moon," so to speak, planting certain things during certain moon phases. I have had relatively good success with this method. The theory behind this is that the gravitational pull of the moon helps or hinders the uptake of water in seeds and roots depending on where the moon is in its orbit relative to the sun.

Bernie Taylor takes the moon theory one step further, proposing that the photoperiod ratios of sun to moonlight trigger certain biological responses in plants and animals. The result in salmon is a variation in peak runs according to our calendar (though by their own calendars they are right on time). Plants are a bit more temperamental, he admits, in that they are also more directly affected by the weather and cultural conditions, but the photoperiod directly affects leafing out, bloom, and ripening of fruits. He proposes that this knowledge aided our ancient ancestors prepare for planting and harvesting, feast and famine, and cites biblical texts and archeological finds to support this hypothesis.

In the chapter *The Harvest We Reap*, he specifically looks at his hypothesis as it applies to grapes. Bud break determines when grape growers start counting the days to harvest, but bud break can happen anywhere within a one month period, so the harvest date can also vary quite a bit from year to year. Most growers believe the time variation is due to the weather. In *Biological Time*, Bernie Taylor used data from a vineyard in Salem, OR to study the correlation between lunar phase and both bud break and bloom. It seems bud break tends toward the darker phases of the moon after May 24th in that area.

Knowing when bud break will occur from one year to the next can aid growers in predicting harvest quality and therefore wine quality for that year. A late bloom and harvest may mean too much rain resulting in fungal infections or fruit cracking or maybe even frost damage. An early bloom could also be damaged by frost and spoil hopes of fruit at all. This is particularly important for the commercial grower.

Many French growers believe in picking grapes at the full moon because that is when they say the energy flow is greatest. They may not know it, but this bit of wisdom fits right in with Bernie Taylor's findings, because the number of days between bud break and harvest (assuming bud break happens at the new moon) will result in harvest during a full moon.

The text in *Biological Time* can be a little hard to understand at times, and referring to the appendices to view the data charts got a little difficult, but the author's theory is good and well supported. Over all, *Biological Time* is an fascinating read if you are interested in the natural world, but not necessarily one you might add to your gardening collection.





3/25/2005

