ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS NEWSLETTER

Spring 2006 Volume 21, Number 2

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Association News

Mother Nature graciously sends me rain today, not for the plants, which are still water logged and half frozen, but for the newsletter I promised you all at the end of April. With a sigh I ease garden sore muscles into the chair before the computer to initiate the first draft.

We had a wonderful turnout for the grafting workshop this year, and have several new members who I hope come to love this club as much as I do. We all learn so much together as we journey through the unique fruit growing conditions in Alaska.

I always forget how busy April is for me after the grafting workshop. All the rootstocks I take home need to be grafted, and it is also time for the hundreds – if not thousands – of seedlings I started to be pricked out and transplanted into six packs. I cannot bear to throw away those little bits of new life I helped bring forth, so each one gets tucked into its own home in hopes I can give away or sell the ones I do not have room to plant. The greenhouse is fired up with the tiny electric heater I keep meaning to replace. Already by mid April there is no longer any room for flats in the greenhouse or on my south facing windows, and the seedlings keep coming. (My husband also is threatening to have me committed and took photos of the grafted trees filling my living room.) The Northland cherries have all begun to bud on their newly grafted nanking rootstocks – even the ones I grafted onto portions of tap-root I had to cut off to fit in the pot.

The orchard needs pruned and trained. The flower beds need cleaned out. The strawberries need raked and thinned. The pots with last year's trees need to come out of their straw mulch to warm in the new spring sun. So much to do, and no time to write, so I want to especially thank you all who submitted items for the newsletter this time. It is always good to read member input and learn from the things other local growers are experiencing. Even national magazines are picking up on Alaskan fruit growers; just check out Good Fruit Grower magazine!

Treasurer's Report:

March 2006

Balance March 1	$4618.70
Deposits (memberships)	$176.00
Checks (newsletter)	<$254.99>
Wells Fargo bal. March 31	$4539.71

Upcoming Events: Orchard Tour June 3rd at Lawrence Clark's.

2005 Orchard Report

by Mike O'Brien
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Hello Tami,

This started as a note on the highlight of the 2005 season but after proofing also includes previous years.

I enjoyed demonstrating the grafting procedure at the workshop last April, 9 with Dwight Bradley and Bob Boyer and other members. It is not often that my business trips, coincide with club activities and it was fun.

My niece graduated from U.A.F. spring last year, so while in Fairbanks I had a opportunity to visit with Clair and Vivian Lammers and finally seen their orchard. It is very impressive layout and water system, stepped, fenced, a very thought organized orchard. Most of all I was impressed with their openness, friendliness, and sharing which made us feel right at home. They had photo album showing fruit on the trees and on plates showing sizes also whether or not the cultivars were still surviving. They grow many of the Canadian varieties most of which I didn't know about but I was in luck I left with one of the few they had left from the 2004 season

While doing some shopping in Kenai last summer I ran into a one of my school friends whom I had grown up with in Anchorage. Alan Klatt's parents homesteaded in south Anchorage, and with the help of their children had a nursery with trees and a landscaping business, later including a driving golf range. I always thought Alan was lucky to be involved in such a business. The Klatts have some very old apple trees that were growing in downtown Anchorage. They later evolved a new variety (Klatts Choice) they propagated through Baileys nursery and I was fortunate enough to be given one by Mr. Lester Klatt. When Allan and I both returned from Vietnam, he went to college in Washington State and received a degree in horticulture, I in the mean time started working construction. In the early seventies I had acquired quite a few apple trees like Yellow Transparent, Duchess, Battleford, Sweet Sixteen, Dolgo, and other crab apple trees. Allen was visiting at the house and I was explaining the problem of moose browsing my grafted apple trees and they were not reliably hardy. His degree came with the knowledge to do field grafting, and he proceeded to impress me with getting takes on seven out of eight grafts onto Dolgo and Ornamental Crab rootstock. I was so impressed and had such a strong interest in growing and especially propagating that even with working construction jobs in and out of town I started my nursery business in 1982, which I still run at this time.

Later my younger sister was working in the same building with another fruit enthusiast (Bob Purvis) and we met somewhere in the mid eighties. It was great seeing Bob and Connie Purvis last fall at the Kenai's Farmers market. They stopped by on their return from Homer on the way to Anchorage. Bob Purvis and Rich Rayner were the key figures by starting the fruit explorers and especially the newsletter, making it possible to share and communicate throughout the state, and that is the key.

Alaska is on a very fast pace now, and keeps getting faster as we explore the different fruit potentials as our climate gets warmer and our knowledge increases every year.

In April we did an annual grafting and bee presentation in Seldovia. In May we did our 15th annual fruit tree presentation and grafting class. Last august I did an article for Fruit Growers News on growing fruit on the peninsula. Later I was visited by a very prominent apple grower from Michigan who was here on vacation and doing some fishing. He stated his favorites are still MacIntosh, and Empire apple and his taste buds were not sold on the new hyped up varieties.

This past September, 18th I attended the second annual apple tasting of Walter and Judith Johnson in Homer. They are members of the South Peninsula Fruit Growers, a very knowledgeable seasoned group. There were many large. beautiful, different varieties of apples for tasting. My favorite apple was the Red Gravenstein.

The Johnson's orchard has a water system, is stepped and fenced, and on a high elevation that over looks the Homer Bowl. In other words a perfect site.

Things pretty much came to a close as we ended the season September 24th with our 15th annual apple tasting, we had over a hundred people attend. We sold lots of apples, juice. pie filling, and trees. To say we were swamped by the attendance was an under-statement.

I am now almost sixty years old (40 to go) and have been inspired by many. Growing fruit trees can really get addictive, but what a rush. In winter we search to acquire, but it is truly each spring we see our friends again as they show signs of life.

Starting in March I graft over 1000 trees and I am thankful that I still feel the same enthusiasm each spring at grafting time.

Best Of Luck,
Mike O'Brien

Featured Fruit

Apricot

Exerpted from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia and the Apricot Interest Group Website

The **Apricot** (*Prunus armeniaca*, syn. *Armeniaca vulgaris*) is a fruit-bearing tree native to China. It is related to the Plum, and classified with it in the subgenus *Prunus* of the genus *Prunus*. It is a small to medium sized tree with a dense, spreading canopy 8-12 m tall; its leaves are shaped somewhat like a heart, with pointed tips, and about 8 cm long and 3-4 cm wide. Its flowers are white to pinkish in color. The fruit appears similar to a peach or nectarine, with a color ranging from yellow to orange and sometimes a red cast; its surface is smooth and nearly hairless. Apricots are stone fruit (drupes), and have only one seed each, often called a "stone".

The name derives from "*apricock*" and "*abrecox*", through the French *abricot*, from the Spanish *albaricoque*, which was an adaptation of the Arabic *al-burquk*, itself a rendering of the late Greek πρεκοκκια or πραικοκιον, adapted from the Latin *praecox* or *praecoquus*, early, possibly referring to the fruit maturing much earlier in the summer than plums.

Cultivation

The apricot originated in northeastern China near the Russian border, not in Armenia as the scientific name suggests. It did arrive in Armenia after moving through central Asia, which took about 3,000 years. The Romans brought it into Europe through Anatolia about 70 BC. While English settlers brought the apricot to the English colonies in the New World, most of modern American production of apricots comes from the seedlings carried to the west coast by Spanish missionaries. Turkey provides 85 percent of the world's dried apricot and apricot kernels today (concentrated around the city of Malatya). Most U.S. production is in California with some in Oregon and Utah. The production and packing industry in California have a heavy Armenian presence.

The Apricot is slightly more cold-hardy than the peach, tolerating winter temperatures as cold as −30 °C or lower if healthy. Hybridisation with the closely related *Prunus sibirica* (Siberian Apricot; hardy to −50 °C but with less palatable fruit) offers options for breeding more cold-tolerant plants. The limiting factor in apricot culture is spring frosts, as they tend to flower very early (before the vernal equinox even) in northern locations like the Great Lakes region; meaning spring frost often kills the flowers. Possibly the second-greatest problem is caused by fluctuating winter temperatures that may "de-harden" the flower buds and cause them to begin development prematurely. Apricots in full bloom can withstand temperatures of 21 degrees and still set a crop. After the "shuck" (spent flower

parts) fall off the young fruits, they cannot tolerate temperatures much below 28 degrees F.

The trees do need some winter cold (even if minimal) to bear and grow properly and do well in Mediterranean climate locations since spring frosts are less severe here but there is some cool winter weather to allow a proper dormancy. The dry climate of these areas is best for good fruit production.

Apricot trees should be planted early in the spring. Except in warm climates, avoid fall planting because of the risk of subsequent winter-injury. The shoot growth produced in a given year is capable of bearing fruits the following year. Removal of older branches by pruning is important to form new growth, and the tree should be pruned in such a way as to allow good penetration of sunlight throughout the tree and to avoid narrow crotches. Detailed pruning of long shoots (shortening them) is best done after you know the size of the crop that has been set. Thin the fruits when they are about the size of a dime or quarter, to about one every 4", to maximize fruit size. Trees that are severely over-cropped will produce small fruit and be vulnerable to cold injury the following winter; furthermore, they may go into bearing only every other year.

Medicinal and non-food uses

Cyanogenic glycosides (found in most stone fruit seeds, bark, and leaves) are found in high concentration in apricot seeds. The drug laetrile, a purported treatment for cancer, is extracted from apricot seeds. As early as AD 502 apricot seeds were used to treat tumors and in the 17th century apricot oil was used in England against tumors and ulcers.

In Europe, apricots were long considered an aphrodisiac, and is used in this context in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and as an inducer of labor, used in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* for this purpose. Dreaming of apricots, in English folklore, is said to be good luck, though the Chinese believe the fruit is a symbol of cowardice.

Food Uses

Apricots are very high in potassium, vitamin A, niacin, and iron. In the kitchen, their generally freestone quality makes them easy to prepare for canning, drying, or use in baked goods. For canning, use fruits that are firm; use fully ripe fruits for fresh eating or drying. Seeds of the apricot grown in central Asia and around the Mediterranean are so sweet that they may be substituted for almonds. Oil pressed from these cultivars has been used as cooking oil. Powdered seeds can also be added to pastry dough to give a distinct flavor.

Apricot Cherry Cobbler

8 fresh apricots (1 LB), sliced
1/3 cup sugar
2 cups pitted fresh cherries (1/2 LB)
1 tbsp flour
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup yellow cornmeal
1/4 tsp salt
1-1/2 tbsp plus 1 tsp sugar
2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp grated orange peel
5 tbsp unsalted butter, chilled
3/4 cup low-fat milk

- ¬ Heat oven to 375°F.
- ¬ Combine apricots and 1/3 cup sugar; set aside.
- ¬ Combine cherries and 1 tbsp flour; set aside.
- ¬ Combine dry ingredients; reserve 1 tsp sugar.
- ¬ Stir in orange peel
- ¬ Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse meal.
- ¬ Add milk; stir just to moisten dry ingredients.
- ¬ Combine fruit in buttered 1-1/2-quart baking dish; spoon batter over top.
- ¬ Sprinkle with remaining sugar.
- ¬ Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until golden brown.
- ¬ Cool slightly and serve. *Makes 8 servings*

Apple: Nectria twig blight (Coral spot)

Photo by: C.R. Foss

Use IPM (Integrated Pest Management) for successful plant problem management.

Biology

Nectria twig blight is caused by a fungus which invades plant tissues through wounds and natural openings in the bark. The infections typically occur on twigs and small branches. Cankers are initially small and sunken, gradually girdling the twigs after two or more seasons. Leaves above the canker wilt and die on girdled twigs. The cankered areas produce pinkish or coral-colored fruiting bodies of the fungus.

Management Options

Select Non-chemical Management Options as Your First Choice!!

- Avoid wounding trees.
- Correct pruning practices minimize injury and improve wound healing. For more information on pruning fruit trees see PNW 400, Training and Pruning Your Home Orchard, or contact your WSU Master Gardeners or county Extension agent.
- Prevent winter injury.
- Provide proper culture to maintain healthy trees.
- Prune out and destroy infected tissues during the summer. Remove all dead wood.

→ As soon as you see those pinkish fruiting bodies! or witted branches

STOP More information on using pesticides.... Revision Date: 1/1/2003

None recommended

Active Ingredients for Listed Products

Home Cranefly Pests of the Pacific Northwest IPM Access Website

Michael Herbert WAMP. coop. Ext.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
YAKIMA COUNTY

This is the information on the orange spots on the apple tree. I think the pruning session went well last evening - Thanks for coming

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Dear Sir or Madam,

This is in regards to an apple sample that you sent to the WSU Extension Office in Yakima, WA. The sample was forwarded to me from Dr. Dana Faubion. The apple branch was infected with a fungus easily recognized (by the distinct bright orange fruiting structures) as *Nectria cinnabarina* or the Nectria twig blight. This particular disease is not one commonly encountered in the Yakima Valley primarily because our dry summers are not conducive to its survival, but climate in Wasilla is probably ideal for it. We do find it occasionally on apple tree tissues that have been damaged by winter injury that could again be a problem encountered more frequently in your climate. Please note that this disease has a large host range of deciduous trees including the birches found in abundance in your neck of the woods. I have included a couple one-page descriptions of the tree disease for your information.

There is little you can do to control this disease in your apple tree. It is an opportunistic organism that often gets into the tree by means of some physical injury to the tree (i.e., winter injured trunks). There is no pesticide that can be sprayed once the organism colonizes the tree. However, pruning out any infected branches (those with the red fruiting bodies) will help reduce the incidence of the disease in this tree and adjacent trees.

I was just passing through Wasilla a couple years ago. If I'm right, you are living close to a strip mall with a big grocery store that my wife and I stopped at when we were passing through your town. Nice area to visit, but it takes a different sort of personality than mine to live and survive those winter months with minimal sunlight.

I might add that your shipping of diseased plant material could get you in trouble with the Federal government if they had, for some odd reason, intercepted it. In the future, a better plan of action would be to take the sample to the local Extension office in your county and or send pictures of the diseased symptoms and tree to our office. E-mail of digital images would work quite nicely also.

I hope you find this information useful and good luck in your apple endeavors.

Sincerely,

Michael

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Photo 64. Dieback of Rome Beauty apple shoot from Nectria twig blight. Note canker at the base of the shoot.

Photo 65. Canker (left) and orange fruiting structures of Nectria twig blight fungus (enlarged at right). (Courtesy [left] D. A. Rosenberger, Hudson Valley Laboratory, Cornell University, Highland, New York)

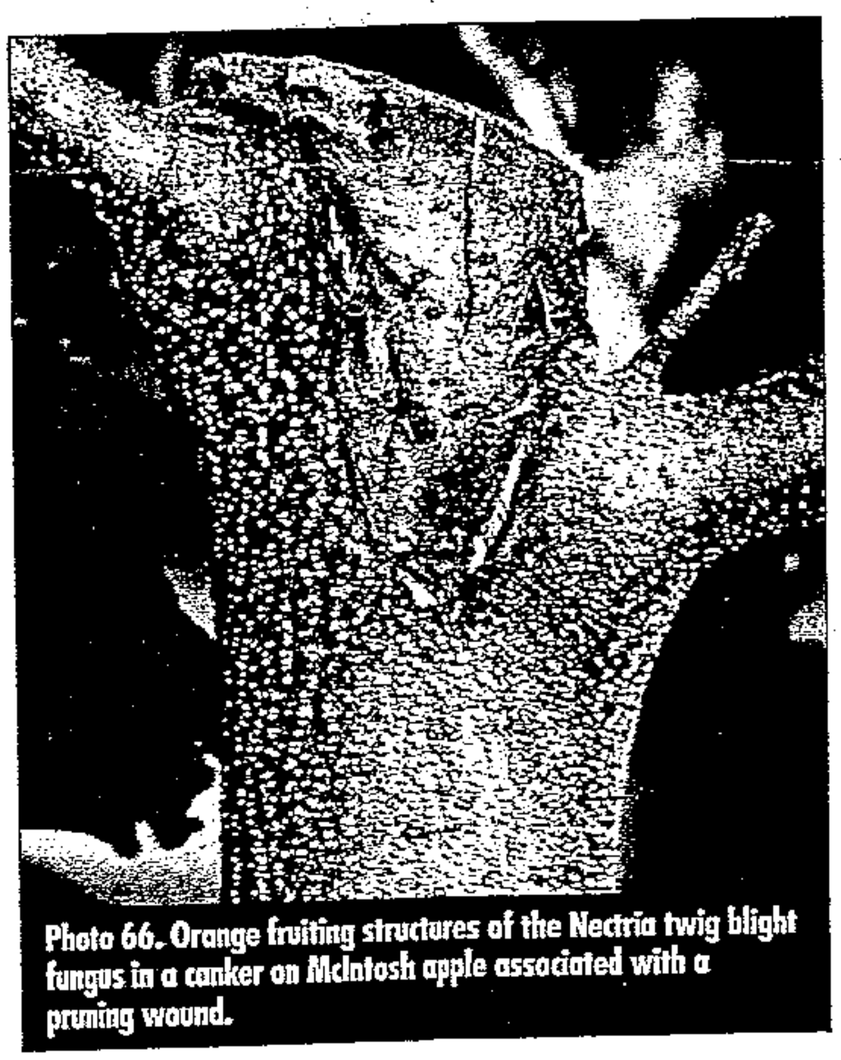

Photo 66. Orange fruiting structures of the Nectria twig blight fungus in a canker on McIntosh apple associated with a pruning wound.

Nectria Twig Blight

Nectria twig blight is a minor disease that results in dieback of apple twigs. It is caused by the fungus *Nectria cinnabarina* (Tode) Fr., asexual state of *Tubercularia vulgaris* Tode. Recognition of the disease is important because it is often confused with fire blight, which requires different control measures.

Symptoms and Disease Cycle

In June, shoot growth on infected twigs begins to wilt and die *(Photo 64)*. Small, sunken cankers are found at the bases of the wilted shoots. Leaves on infected shoots appear to die from the base, not from the tip, as with fire blight, and no signs of blighted blossom clusters remain on the twigs. In mid- to late summer, bright orange or coral-red structures (sporodochia) ⅛ to ¼ inch in diameter appear on the surface of the cankers *(Photo 65)*. Orange sporodochia are also often associated with pruning wounds and winter-injured tissues on apple *(Photo 66)*. In autumn, the fungus produces clusters of small, dark red, globular perithecia, but these structures are rarely present in the eastern United States.

Optimum fungal growth occurs in culture at 70 degrees F, with moderate growth at 80 to 85 degrees F and limited growth at 37 degrees F. Wounds from fruit harvest, which probably take a long time to heal late in the season, combined with prolonged periods of wet weather after harvest, appear to favor the establishment of infection. The disease has been noted primarily on cultivars with a large cluster-bud base, such as Rome Beauty, Ben Davis and Northern Spy.

Control

The disease is not usually severe enough to require special control measures. As a result, chemical control procedures have not been developed. Removal of infected twigs helps reduce the carryover of inoculum.

Selected References

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Thomas, H. E., and A. B. Burrell. 1929. A twig canker of apple caused by *Nectria cinnabarina*. *Phytopathology*, 19:1125–1128.

Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Association
Annual Directory 2006

Purpose and Goals: The Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Assn. was founded in January 1985. Our purpose is to share in and benefit from the personal experience of successful fruit growing in Alaska and to help educate anyone interested in the fruit growing experience. Our goals include locating, testing and preserving superior or special fruit, berry and nut varieties relevant to Alaska, identifying unique cultural methods / materials, propagation techniques, fruit breeding and grafting procedures, adaptation of species and cultivars and all other aspects of fruit growing. Other goals include evaluating various fruit cultivars for hardiness, instructions to members and educating anyone interested in fruit growing techniques and cultural practices, exchange of information, group ordering of materials, promoting communication and friendship between members, other enthusiasts and encouraging friends and neighbors to establish their own fruit trees, bushes and shrubs. The Association also seeks to help the Cooperative Extension Service to the extent possible. We seek to publish at least a Tri - annual newsletter containing articles on fruit growing in Alaska.

Our monthly meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month. Our spring, summer and fall meetings are for our annual grafting workshop, orchard visits and Apple tasting, with time and place varying.

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The North American Fruit Explorers (NAFEX) is a National organization which publishes a quarterly journal called The Pomona; holds an annual convention and has a library of horticulture reference materials available to members for low rental costs. NAFEX also has a network of head testers for both the major and minor fruits and nuts. To join the national organization write to: NAFEX, 1716 Apples Rd. Chapin, IL. 62628.

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