

ALASKA NAFEX NEWSLETTER

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A Publication of the Alaska Chapter, North American Fruit Explorers (NAFEX)

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MEETING DATES

April 14. Thurs. 7 p.m. NBA lunchroom
Grafting workshop. Speaker T.B.A.

April 9. Sat. 1:30 p.m. 301 O'Neill Resources
Building, Fairbanks. Grafting Workshop with
Bob Purvis and Rich Raynor

Late April. (On a Saturday) Pruning work
party.

May 12. Thurs. 7 p.m. NBA lunchroom
Planting and care of young fruit trees. Rich
Raynor, speaker.

June 9. Thurs. 7 p.m. NBA lunchroom. Pie
cherries: varieties, characteristics, culture. Eric
Simpson, speaker.

If enough people are interested, an orchard tour in
late August or Sept, 1988 is possible, as well as
another spring fruit walk.

NEW MEMBERS

Fred W. & Margaret Anderson
P.O. Box 115
Homer, AK 99603
235-8725 (h)

Jack Bitzer
P.O. Box 3224
Ketchikan, AK 99901
225-6533 (h)

Patrick Wright
P.O. Box 90386
Anchorage, AK 99509
279-1340 (h)

Joe Want
P.O. Box 10044
Fairbanks, AK 99710

CHAPTER NEWS

Twenty members attended the March Meeting
Of NAFEX in Anchorage. **Cathy Wright** of
the Plant Materials Center gave an outstanding
presentation on rhubarb and also talked about
what had survived among her apple rootstocks at
various test sites around the State.

Many thanks to **Ruth Edmondson** who
prepared the preliminary draft of by-laws for our
local NAFEX Chapter. These by-laws are now
being revised by the Chapter officers and will be
presented to Chapter members at a future
meeting.

One other hot news item from **Bob Purvis**.
While walking near the Egan Convention Center,
Bob noticed that there were two Ussurian pears
and one Siberian Crab tree planted nearby. These
trees formerly were located beside the Reeve
Building across the street from Nordstrom's and
have apparently survived the move of 50-60 feet
to their new location.

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

Have you read the article by Susan Brook in
the Winter 87 Pomona? Is she a member of our
chapter?

I'd like her to know I'm very disappointed in
her article. I think it gives a bad impression of
fruit growing in Alaska and in Anchorage. The
article is well written for the information she
gave but she doesn't say anything about trying to
protect her trees by mulching or removing snow
load. She doesn't indicate exactly where she is
located and the particular conditions.

I have been growing fruit trees for several years here in Anchorage and I admit that was a bad year. I only lost two cherry trees out of eleven trees and I believe that was my fault, improper pruning and over fertilization. It was obvious early that winter that we would have little snow to protect our trees so I mulched with straw in November. I also live in a protected warm mini climate in Anchorage's Spenard area.

Growing fruit trees in Alaska is a challenge I admit. I sat through a class on how to protect young fruit trees from moose damage chuckling to myself because I live in a well populated area of Anchorage. No moose had come into my yard in 17 years. The next week one walked through and bit off the top of my apple tree. Last summer my son mowed down my small but very nice Japanese plum tree with the lawn mower. Yes it is definitely a challenge but last summer I got 50 very small apples off one tree and eighty off of another. I was very pleased. I am an Extension Service Master Gardener, and I rely on magazines like Pomona, Organic Gardening and members of our local NAFEX organization for assistance in times like the winter of 85-86.

I hope other Anchorage growers will write to Pomona and let them know that she is not typical and though she had a bad year some of us had good survival rates among our fruit trees.

-Martie Black

SUSAN BROOK REPLIES

I would be delighted if my article spurs Ms. Black and others in Alaska to respond in the same way as Minnesotan apple growers did to Horace Greely's famous remark (see "Take Heart, All You Discouraged Alaska Fruit Growers" in February, 1988 issue of Alaska NAFEX Newsletter).

I purposely did not indicate my exact location, beyond saying the orchard was in the Panhandle, because the article was written for the national NAFEX publication, Pomona - and who in the Lower 48 has ever heard of Gustavus? I did identify the soils, precipitation, average summer and winter temperatures and isostatic rebound - characteristics that are more important to fruit growers than names of towns.

I also purposely do not mulch during the winter or remove snow from branches because I am interested in learning how different stocks

perform under "real world" conditions. There is no doubt that high survival rates and abundant fruit set are possible in Alaska given the right rootstock/ variety combination, favorable microclimate, cooperative weather and TLC; but my objective is to find rootstocks that pull through on a marginal site and with minimal care - in other words, in a typical Southeast Alaska backyard with typical homeowner care.

I join with Ms. Black in encouraging Anchorage fruit growers to write about their experiences for Pomona and the Alaska NAFEX Newsletter. The agony of spending a few hours putting words on paper is soon followed by the warm glow of knowing you have added to the knowledge of other fruit explorers. This is especially crucial in Alaska where horticulture research budgets and staff must be stretched to cover not only fruit growing, but also greenhouse, vegetable and ornamental/ conservation plant production. Susan Brook

APPLES AT TRAPPER CREEK

Two new members of NAFEX, Kenneth and Marilyn Marsh of Trapper Creek (near Talkeetna) relate successes they have had with growing fruit trees. Marilyn reported that 'Rescue' and 'Kerr' have survived at least 2.5, possibly 3.5 winters and fruited well in 1987. 'Trail' has been through at least 3 and possibly as many as 4-6 winters and also fruited this past season. All were purchased from Washburn's Nursery whose source for trees is Canada. A 'Yellow Transparent' which is also bearing has survived 4.5 winters, and a Ussurian pear, while only about 3 feet high, has survived 3.5 winters. The Marsh's 'Yellow Transparent' appears to be the farthest north tree of that cultivar in Alaska that is fruiting as well as surviving. Can anyone refute that claim?

The Marshes will plant on 'Ranetka' rootstocks: 'Geneva Early', 'Collet', 'Heyer 12', 'Mantet', 'Summerred' and 'Whitney Earlygold' plus a 'Norland' on Malus Borowinka rootstock this spring. Elsewhere in Trapper Creek, new member April Moore will be planting 'Heyer 12', 'Summerred', 'Mantet', and 'Glenorchie' apple trees this summer. The growing season around Talkeetna appears to be a little shorter than that in Anchorage, but it is warmer and more sunny. There is usually a good amount of snow cover in the winter, also and little wind. -R. Purvis

APPLE VARIETIES FOR SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA

By Robert A. Purvis

The following paragraphs describe apple and applecrab varieties which are currently producing fruit in one or more locations in Anchorage, Palmer, Eagle River, or Wasilla. The numbers under "Reference" refer to the numbers of books or articles in the bibliography. The letters under "Sources" stand for nurseries, either retail ("r") or wholesale ("w") and refer to their availability as of spring 1987.

Varieties are listed in approximate order of ripening. See attached "Apple and Crabapple Variety Ripening Sequence for Anchorage" for more specific information.

CHINESE GOLDEN EARLY (parentage unknown). Tree is vigorous grower, very upright in growth habit, wood somewhat brittle, hardy throughout Southcentral. Bears very young (2-3 years old). Fruit small to medium sized, deep yellow color, very sweet but does not keep more than a week or two. Excellent for eating, fair for cooking. Ref.: Personal observation. Source: D (r), no wholesale.

NORLAND (Rescue X Melba). Introduced 1979 at Scott, Saskatchewan. Tree extremely hardy, genetic semidwarf, upright to spreading branch structure, hardy throughout Southcentral and moderately so in Fairbanks. Bears young (3-4 years old). Fruit 2 to 2½ inches diameter, oblong, greenish-yellow heavily washed with pink and red striping when fully ripe. Excellent for all purposes, stores till Feb. if picked slightly immature. Under adverse conditions it seems to ripen before Yellow Transparent. Ref.: Personal obs., 1. Source: J, P&M, AG, MF (r); B, VV (w).

GENEVA EARLY (Quinte X July Red). Introduced in 1982 in NY. Should be hardy in most parts of Southcentral. Fruit is solid reddish-pink, highly aromatic, flesh cream-colored, semi-firm to soft. Probably best for eating rather than cooking based on taste trials. Ref.: Personal obs., 5. Source: BC (r). H (w).

YELLOW TRANSPARENT (Russia, mid-1800s). Tree is vigorous grower, moderately upright, hardy throughout Southcentral and probably for Fairbanks. Bears young (3-4 years old) and is quite productive, and a good pollinator. Fruit is pale yellowish green, 2 to 3 inches diameter, sometimes ridged on one side. Flesh is white, fine grained, crisp, juicy, and tart. Excellent for culinary use, good to eat if fully ripe. Fruit bruises easily and goes mealy quickly out of refrigeration. Good variety for the novice fruit-grower. Ref.: Personal obs., 6, BC catalog. Source: AG, BE, DG, MF, J, P&M, BC, SL, BC, (r); B (w).

LODI (Montgomery X Yellow Transparent). Tree very hardy, vigorous grower. Fruit is larger, firmer, slightly more tart than Yellow Transparent, grown commercially for culinary use in Lower 48 sometimes. Keeps somewhat longer than Yellow Transparent. Ref.: H, BC, SL catalogs. Source: J, AG, SL, BC (r). H (w).

VISTA BELLA (NJ, 1974). Tree vigorous, somewhat spreading, hardy in Palmer and probably elsewhere. Fruit is medium sized, bright red, firm, high quality. Flesh creamy white, moderately sweet, good for fresh eating and culinary use. Fruit appears to keep somewhat better than many other apples of this season. Ref.: Personal obs., H and BC catalogs. Source: J, BC (r). H (w).

HEYER #12 (Saskatchewan, 1936, Russian seedling). Tree extremely hardy, vigorous grower, bounces back quickly if cold-injured, drought-tolerant. Bears very young (2-3 years old). Crops regularly in Fairbanks! Fruit 2 to 2½ inches diameter, yellowish green, good for pies and sauce but generally a little too tart for fresh eating. Breaks down quickly after ripening. Ref.: Personal obs., 1, 2. Source: J, W (r). VV (w).

SOURCES - Key to Abbreviations

- AG : Alaska Greenhouses, Anchorage, AK
- B : Bailey Nurseries, Inc., St. Paul, MN
- BC : Bear Creek Nursery, Northport, WA
- D : Jay Dearborn, Palmer, AK
- DA : DeArmoun Greenery, Anchorage, AK
- F : Farmer Seed & Nursery, Faribault, MN
- H : Hilltop Orchards & Nurseries, Inc., Hartford, MI
- J : Jacobson's Greenhouses, Wasilla, AK
- MF : Alaska Mill, Feed & Garden, Anchorage, AK
- P&M : P&M Nursery Services, Eagle River, AK
- SL : St. Lawrence Nurseries, Potsdam, NY
- VV : Van Vloten Nurseries, Ltd., Pitt Meadows, B.C., Canada
- W : Washburn Farm Nursery, Palmer, AK

For complete addresses and telephone numbers, see the sheet "Sources of Fruit Trees and Berry Bushes."

RESCUE (Blushed Calville seedling). Introduced 1936 at Scott, Saskatchewan. Tree hardy in Fairbanks, spreading growth habit. Bears very young (2-3 years old). Fruit 1 to 2 inches diameter, almost solid red over dull yellow, tangy-sweet flavor good for eating and culinary use. Tree is very productive and somewhat self-fertile, but fruit goes mealy in storage after several weeks. Ref.: Personal obs., 1. Source: MF, W (r); VV (w).

MANTET (Tetovsky X McIntosh). Introduced 1929 in Manitoba. Tree hardy in Southcentral, upright-spreading growth habit, should bear about 4-5 years old. Fruit 2 to 2-3/4 inches in diameter, yellowish green with red blush, juicy, tender, aromatic, with sweet flesh making it excellent for fresh eating. Fruit should store 1-2 months. REF.: B, BC, SL, F catalogs. Source: P&M, BC, SL, F (r); B (w).

WESTLAND (Heyer 12 X Dr. Bill). From Brooks, Alberta, introduced 1979. Tree quite hardy. Bears fruit 2 1/2 to 3 1/4 inches diameter, greenish yellow with medium red overly. Considered fair for eating, good for cooking, fair for storage. Ref.: 1, pers. obs. Source: AG (r), J (r); B (w), VV (w).

VIKING (Jonathan, Delicious, Early McIntosh & others). From Wisconsin, 1969. Tree hardy in Southcentral, upright-spreading growth habit, should bear about 3-4 years old, vigorous grower. Fruit 2-3 inches diameter, oblong, dark red. Flesh is firm and white, crisp, juicy, good for eating and cooking, stores well. Ref.: 4, personal obs. Source: H (r & w).

HAZEN (Duchess X Starking Delicious) From South Dakota, c. 1980. Tree hardy in Southcentral, upright-spreading growth habit, genetic semi-dwarf, should bear around 4 years old. Fruit red with firm juicy flesh, good for eating, juicy. Flesh slightly coarse. Ref.: BC, F, SL catalogs. Source: BC, F, SL, J.

STATE FAIR (Mantet X Oriole). From Minnesota, c. 1970. Tree hardy in Southcentral, spreading growth habit, should bear about 4-5 years old. Fruit is red, round-conic, firm, 2 to 2-3/4 inches diameter, excellent for all purposes and stores quite well. Can be quite sweet when fully ripe. Ref.: BC, F catalogs, personal obs. Source: BC, F (r), AG, J (r); B (w).

JERSEYMAC (Julyred, Melba, others) From NJ, c. 1974. Has survived in Fairbanks. Tree vigorous, upright-spreading, productive. Good flavor, aromatic, medium firm, good eating, bright red color. Ref.: 3, personal obs. Source: H (r & W).

ORIOLE (Yellow Transparent X Liveland Raspberry). Minnesota. Hardy throughout Southcentral. Tree is upright-spreading in growth habit, bears about 5 years old. Fruit is large (2 1/4 to 3 1/4 inches in Anchorage), firm, moderately sweet, yellow with orange blush on one side. Excellent for eating and cooking, stores well. Probably the best yellow apple commonly available locally. Ref.: B, BC, SL catalogs, personal