

ALASKA NAFEX NEWSLETTER

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MEETING DATES

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.

NOTES FROM A NEW NAFEX MEMBER

I am a new member of NAFEX and haven't done very much testing. I nonetheless have ideas of what fruiting trees and shrubs could grow here [in Fairbanks] in addition to previously tested ones. To me, the 'Amsib' crabapple might be worthwhile for the Interior. It originated in Moscow, USSR. Its parentage is Malus ioensis x M. baccata. With such parentage, it might be hardy enough for Fairbanks. It has a diameter of 1 3/4 inches and is a good keeper.

When I was looking through the Register of New Fruit and Nut Varieties, 2nd ed. by Brooks and Olmo, I noticed an apple called 'Heyer 20'. It is from Neville, Saskatchewan, the home of 'Heyer 12'. I know that 'Heyer 12' will grow in the Interior, and I think that 'Heyer 20' will, also. This apple has a diameter of approximately 3 inches.

I think that a species of dewberry will grow in the Interior. One of its parents is the bramble known as the European dewberry or dewberry of England. It is native to Soviet Union and Central Asia. The fruit is large and black, but doesn't

taste very good. The dewberry's scientific name is Rubus caeaius. It forms fertile hybrids with the red raspberry. Perhaps this hybrid could be the first bramble that is technically a blackberry or dewberry that will grow in Alaska without a lot of special treatment. This hybrid is known as Rubus x idaeoides.

The Canada plum, Prunus nigra, appears to be a promising plum for Alaska. It grows north into Manitoba in a area that is about as cold as Fairbanks has been for the last several years. The fruit is small and sour. I also read about a species of plum known as Prunus ussuriensis. My best translation of its name is Ussurian plum. It is hardy to -50 C and is native to eastern Siberia. The fruit is small and has a bad-tasting skin.

On a more local note, I was wondering if any member can help me identify a species of bramble. It was described to me by Merrill Hakala as a thornless, red dewberry that grows between Fairbanks and Circle and along the Yukon River. It has trailing, semi-woody stems up to 3 feet long, and large berries that cling to its core. This bramble grows in the brush. If anyone has knowledge of this fruit or any of the non native fruits I described, please call me at 457-4736 or write to P.O. Box 10044 Fairbanks, AK 99710. Thank you.
-Joe Want

A SHORT HISTORY OF FRUIT GROWING IN HAINES

The Haines area has long been recognized for good growing conditions. We can probably grow a greater variety of plants here than other parts of Alaska. At first this area was considered as a major agricultural area, but it has one problem--lack of large areas that can be farmed. There is good soil here, but it occurs only in small local areas.

There were many farms here in the early 1900's. Charlie Anway was one of the more

successful, and the one who continued for the longest time. One of Charlie's competitors was Joe DeBlondeau. In the Southeastern Country Fair in Juneau in 1923, Anway only won second prize for his apples. First prize was won by Joe.

The following article tells a little about Joe's experience with apples. Apparently it was first published in the Juneau Empire, was republished in Strollers Weekly, then picked up and published in the Daily Alaskan of Skagway on 17 Nov., 1921.

"Apples will ripen in the Chilkat Valley says Joe DeBlondeau. He sent apples to the Empire-- which were of good flavor and enjoyed.

Four years ago, DeBlondeau secured 40 young apple trees of various kinds from the Sitka Experimental Station. Ten of them died because of the mice girdling them under the snow. He still has 30 trees left.

The only variety to ripen has been the 'Yellow Transparent' which is one of the earliest apples. One crabapple also has ripened fruit. Six of the trees have never bloomed. 'Duchess of Oldenburg' trees have apples that are fine for cooking purposes, but they never ripen. The 'Red June' variety have but a few apples, and the trees crack, and he is wrapping them with sacks to prevent this. Mr. DeBlondeau is of the opinion that apples can be raised in the Chilkat Valley, and he will graft some of the trees he already has growing and plant others next spring. With his trees only planted 4 years, he has picked as high as a box of apples from a single tree.

It is pointed out that the Chilkat Valley, where the famous Haines strawberry comes from, is free from the excessive rainfall that occurs on some other parts of Alaska and which has proven detrimental to ripening of fruit on the tree, and that quick ripening apples should get enough sunshine in the Valley to ripen there in the growing season."

Unfortunately, Joe DeBlondeau developed tuberculosis a few years later, and did not keep up his orchard. He died in the early 1930's. Today, his farm has been logged and all evidence of his orchard destroyed.

-Bob Henderson

'SUMMERCRISSP' PEAR- WORTH A TRY IN SOUTHERN ALASKA

'Summercrisp' is a cold-hardy, early season pear introduced by the University of Minnesota in

1987. The name 'Summercrisp' connotes the early harvest season and that the fruit is best consumed without ripening, while the flesh is firm and crisp.

The parentage of 'Summercrisp' is unknown. It was received as a seedling at the U of Minnesota in 1933 from John Gaspard of Caledonia, Minnesota. Its growth characteristics indicate that it probably has Pyrus ussuriensis [hardy in Fairbanks] and P. communis in its background. It is recognized as the hardiest pear in the U of Minnesota collection and is as hardy as 'Luscious' and 'Golden Spice' and suffers less injury than 'Patten' or 'Parker'.

'Summercrisp' is 6-8 meters tall [in Minnesota] and conical in shape when mature. It flowers annually, and requires cross pollination. The fruit are 8-10 cm long and 6-8 cm in diameter and have a red blush over a green background color. The harvest season at Minneapolis is Aug 10-15. Fruit must be refrigerated immediately after harvest while the flesh is still firm. They must not be allowed to ripen on or off the tree since grit cells, browning of flesh around the seeds and strong aroma all reduce quality. They will store for 6 weeks when harvested unripe.

Excerpted from an article in Hortscience 22(5):964. 1987.

RAINTREE WORTH CHECKING OUT

I recently received the publication, "Raintree Nursery 1987-88 Catalog", featuring fruits, nuts, and berries for northern growers. Raintree is the first retail source I have seen for the new 'Summercrisp' pear from Minnesota. They also offer 'Harrow Delight' and 'Luscious', although these two are probably a bit late for Anchorage. They have 'Norland' and 'Antonovka' rootstocks, and 'Pipestone', 'Waneta', and 'Toka' plums on Prunus americana. The new Washington State apricot, 'Puget Gold', is available on St. Julian A plum rootstocks and was bred expressly for its ability to set and size fruit in cool, frosty spring weather. It is described as large, elongated, freestone, prolific, and rather early ripening. The cultivar is self fertile. Fruit tree prices are \$14.50 to \$19.50; shipping is 25% of the order cost in addition.

Raintree Nursery has no hardy apple rootstocks, but they sell St. Julian A and 'Pixie' plum, the GM 61 sweet cherry, and the 'Old Home x Farmingdale 333' pear rootstocks in

retail quantities. They also have a good selection of small fruits appropriate for the Northwest and in many cases, Alaska, including lingonberries, blueberries, 'Jonckheere Van Tets' and other red or black currants, jostaberries (a black currant-gooseberry cross), gooseberries, hardy kiwis, and some ornamentals.

The selection of tree-growing supplies offers branch spreaders, grafting and budding supplies, and ecological pest control items. Their book selection page nicely complements what one might be able to buy from St. Lawrence Nursery. Prices for all products seem reasonable, but note that shipping costs to Alaska are 25%. Raintree ships by UPS. The address of Raintree Nurseries is 391 Butts Road, Morton, WA 98356; phone (206)496-6400. Sam and Mayda Banewitz are the owners and operators of the nursery, and Northwoods Nursery of Molalla, OR is closely linked with it also. -R. Purvis.

A VISIT FROM DAN WHITNEY?

Dan Whitney, the head apple tester for NAFEX, has said he would be willing to come to Alaska this summer, probably in August, to conduct a workshop or teach a short course on advanced topics in grafting, budding, pruning, and other topics of interest to NAFEX members. The Chapter would, however, have to pay his way up here, and those attending the workshop or class would have to bear the cost of an airline ticket from Seattle to Anchorage, which is currently \$398 - 417 on a Supersaver. We would need at least 16 people to keep cost per person reasonable (around \$25.00). Dan is interested in seeing how the trees he saw in 1985 are doing and can probably visit members who have special things to ask him about their own plantings. Please contact me if you are interested in this workshop.

-Bob Purvis

EVERYBODY COMPLAINS ABOUT THE.....

So you thought the summer of 1987 was a poor one weatherwise in Southcentral? The Local Climatological Data summary published by the National Weather Service shows just how poor it was at the Anchorage International Airport weather station.

For April, the average high was 45.8 F; low was 30 F; average, 37.9 F which is 2.5 degrees above normal for the month. Six days were clear, 6 partly cloudy, and 18 cloudy.

For May, the last frost was May 11. The corresponding averages were 54.2, 40.2 and 47.2, the monthly average being 0.9 degrees above normal. A hint of trouble to come lay in the fact that average daily temperatures were 2 to 9 degrees below normal from the 22nd to the 29th. Only one day rated a clear, 8 as partly cloudy, and the rest as cloudy.

June was the pits! Only eight days saw the temperature reach or exceed 60 F; the average high was only 58 F, low 45.7, and the monthly average if 51.9 F was 2.5 degrees below normal. From the 8th to the 30th temperatures were, with few exceptions, below normal. Not even one day rated as clear, only two as partly cloudy, and 28 were cloudy!

July was only slightly better. The average high was 63.1 F, low was 51 F, average 57.1 or 1.0 degrees below normal. Temperatures were consistently below normal from July 1 to 14. It should be noted here that the first 30 days after blossom pollination are the most critical in determining fruit size. The timing of the below average temperatures, June 8 to July 14 couldn't have been worse! Two days were clear, 5 were partly cloudy, 24 cloudy. Precipitation for both June and July was normal.

August tried to make up for June and July. Its average high of 65.2, low 49.4 and average of 57.3 F were 1.1 degrees above average, and for 7 days straight the high was 71 to 76 F. Temperatures were normal or above for nearly 3/4 of the days of the month. Seven days were clear, 6 partly cloudy, and 18 cloudy. Precipitation, 0.43 inches was 1.68 inches below normal.

September, with an average daily high of 54.3, low 41.6 and average 48 F was 0.2 degrees below normal. The first frost was Sept 14, giving us 126 frost-free days. One day was clear, 3 partly cloudy, and 26 cloudy, but precipitation, 1.91 inches was 0.54 inches below normal. It should be mentioned here that much of Anchorage did receive frost on the morning of August 31.

-R Purvis

[Editor's note: Gee whiz, Bob. You should have been in Fairbanks last summer. Ours was great!]

HAPPY SPRING PLANTING!