

# ALASKA NAFEX NEWSLETTER

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

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## MEETING DATES

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

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## SPRING GRAFTING SUCCESS

Bob Purvis traveled to Fairbanks on April 9 and presided over an excellent grafting workshop. Its success is evidenced by the number of positive reports I have been receiving. Nearly everyone who attended the workshop now has actively growing apple grafts thanks to the timely tips from Bob. Bob, Lawrence Clark and I also have had good success grafting two sweet-fruited Ussurian pear cultivars from scionwood Bob received from the Moreton Arboretum. I tried some budding with the Ussurian pear, but the bark is so thin, it is very easy to tear and difficult to work with. I found cleft and whip-and-tongue grafts to be very easy with a high success rate. Bob also reports that he had excellent "takes" with his 'Gifford' and 'Ure' grafts, but no certain "takes" of 'Hudar' pear on OHxF333 rootstock. Both of his Pobeda 867 cherry plum grafts are growing on Prunus salicina mandshurica, and 3 of 4 of Rich Raynor's grafts of Bill Baird's cherry onto 'Mahaleb' rootstock are growing.

I tried Amelanchier grafts for the first time this spring and had great success. I suspect that you don't hear more about saskatoon cultivars grafted onto a saskatoon rootstock because of the tendency of the rootstocks to sucker. You would need constant pruning to keep the rootstock from out-growing the scion. Once my grafts have "taken" I plan to plant them deeply so that the graft union is buried. This practice does two things. It inhibits suckering of the deeply-buried rootstock, and it promotes root production on the buried portion of the scion. eventually, the scion

will be growing on its own roots. I am curious to see how this practice works in Alaska, especially with our cold soils. If the rootstock is buried too deep, the cold soils may limit nutrient uptake and thus stunt the growth of the scion.

I am anxious to hear from other NAFEX members. How did your fruit plants overwinter? What new cultivars are you trying? Any cultural practices that were successful? Please send me a short note or post card, and let me hear from you.

-P. Holloway

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## GOOD LUCK BOB PURVIS !

Bob Purvis, founder and current President of the NAFEX Alaska Chapter, has decided to turn his hobby of fruit growing into a profession. Starting August 22, Bob will become a graduate student at Washington State University and work on a degree in horticulture with an emphasis on (you guessed it) apples. He and his wife, Connie will be moving to Pullman later this summer. Good luck, Bob, in your change of career. You will make a fine pomologist!

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## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Peggy McKaig c/o Government Hill Barbershop  
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## NEWS FROM THE PLANT MATERIALS CENTER AND THE UAF AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

This past spring Cathy Wright of the Plant Materials Center and Pat Holloway of the Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station submitted a joint grant proposal to the Alaska Division of Agriculture for small fruit variety testing in the Railbelt area. The project was funded, and 13 test sites have been selected. In the Fairbanks area plants will be grown by grower-cooperators, some of whom are NAFEX members, in Delta Junction, the Eielson Agricultural Project near North Pole, another site in North Pole, on Goldstream Road, Chena Hot Springs Road, and at the University Experiment Station. In southcentral Alaska, tests will be conducted in Kenai, Anchorage, Palmer, Wasilla, Trapper Creek, Talkeetna, and at the Plant Materials Center. Several varieties of small fruits will be tested over a five-year period, and grower-cooperators have agreed to gather information on plant hardiness and fruit productivity. This information will be valuable to all interested fruit growers. Some of the fruit varieties that have already been purchased include 'Northblue', 'Northsky' and 'Northcountry' half-high blueberries; 'Heritage', 'Anelma', 'Festival', 'Boyne', 'Kiska' and 'Reveille' red raspberries; 'Honeywood', 'Thiesen', and 'Smokey' saskatoons; and 'Holland Long Bunch', 'Swedish Black', 'Consort', 'Honeywood', and 'Boskoop Giant' currants. Some of the varieties are quite reliable such as 'Kiska' raspberries. These varieties will be used as a standard on which to evaluate the new, untried varieties. Results of this experiment will be shared with all NAFEX members as the grower-cooperators make their reports.

-P. Holloway

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### INFORMATION ON HARDY KIWIS?

Several NAFEX members have indicated an interest in trying to grow the hardy kiwis in Alaska. We would like to hear from any member who has tried them or is planting them this year. Please share any information you have on hardiness, cultural techniques, etc. with other members.

-P. Holloway

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## SOME FRUIT POSSIBILITIES

I am a new member of NAFEX and haven't done very much testing. At the same time, however, I have a good idea of what fruit varieties will grow in the Interior. This is the result of reading many books. Recently, I looked through a book entitled "Wide Hybridization in Plants" edited by N.V. Tsitsin. In it, I found 8 cherries, 4 apricots, 2 plums, and an apple-pear hybrid, 9 apples, and 3 cherry-plums. Descriptions of all of them were totally lacking, but they can grow in Kozlov (Minchurinsk) USSR to the best of my knowledge.

The cherry known as *Prunus cerapadus*, judging from its parental species, might be worth trying in the Interior. Its parents are Japanese form of European birdcherry (*Prunus padus*) and 'Ideal' sour cherry (*P. cerasus*). In fruit size, it is intermediate and is produced in racemes like the birdcherry, but fewer in number.

I am pretty sure that the ground or Samara steppe cherry (*P. fruticosa*) is hardy enough to grow in the Interior. It is presently used as a dwarfing rootstock and is available from Lawyer's Nursery, Plains, MT.

As much as I would like to give descriptions of the other 6 cherry varieties, I can only give their names and possibly species. The sour cherry 'Ideal' might be worth trying in the Interior, Southeast and Southcentral. 'Plodorodnaya Michurina' ('Michurin's Fertile'), 'Polzhir', 'Krasa Severa' ('Northern Beauty'), 'Lyubskaya', and 'Plodorodnaya' cherries might also be worth trying in the same areas as 'Ideal'. The 'Krasa Severa' is either a sweet or duke cherry.

'Uspekh' ('Success'), 'Laureat' ('Laureate'), 'Triumf' ('Triumph'), and 'Severnyi' ('Northern') apricots might be worth trying in Alaska as would 'Okiya' and 'Chernosliv' plums.

I know of a fertile hybrid between the Siberian crabapple and the 'Dekanka Zimnyaya' ('Winter Dekanka') pear (*Pyrus communis*). It varies in shape and size from pyriform to round, small to large. This might be worth trying in any part of Alaska where apples have been grown.

'Ural'skii krasnyi' ('Ural Red'), 'Parment', 'Parment yagodnyi' ('Parment Berry'), 'Ranetka purpurovaya' ('Purple Reinette' {*Malus robusta*}), 'Pepin shafrannyi', 'Gornoaltaiskoe' ('Altai Mountain'), 'Pepinka altaiskaya' ('Altai Pepin'), 'Altaiskii golubok' ('Altai Pigeon'), and 'Nikiforovskoe' apples, applecrabs and crabapples might be worth trying.

'Desertnaya' (Dessert'), 'Yuta', and 'Novinka' ('New') cherry plums should be tested in various parts of Alaska to determine their hardiness and productivity. If anyone knows of sources for any of these fruits, please contact me at P.O. Box 10044 Fairbanks, AK 99710. -Joe Want

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Editors Note: It is obvious that there is quite a lot of material from northern European sources that we have not yet tried in Alaska. Most of us have concentrated on Canadian or northern U.S. varieties. One of the goals of the variety testing program at the Plant Materials Center and the Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station is to locate this plant material and attempt to get enough materials to test. If they prove hardy, then the PMC will endeavor to propagate the materials for distribution around Alaska. We are always looking for sources of new plant materials, so if you have any suggestions of things we might try, please contact Cathy Wright or myself any time. The USDA has just instituted a nationwide computer network of plant resources, and if it is available, we should be able to get sufficient test materials for both Fairbanks and Palmer test sites. USDA researchers also do a lot of plant collecting on request, so if enough people are interested in a particular variety, we can submit a request for collection to the USDA. That's no guarantee that we will ever get the variety, but it's a possible source. Unfortunately, the testing process is very slow, so the individual NAFEX member may not be able to try the variety for several years. Several members have commented that they would simply snip some scionwood from the plants at the Plant Materials Center and the Experiment Station. Aside from the fact that this practice is theft, we hope that most NAFEX members have more ethics and common sense than that. There is usually a reason that plant materials have not been released. Either it is available from a commercial source, or the test materials are too small for propagation. Some members have asked to collect the fruit from trees at the Experiment Station in order to extract the seeds and propagate some seedling apple trees. This practice is acceptable as long as a request is made to the horticulturists in charge before hand. Keep in mind that seedlings will not be the same variety as the tree from which it was taken. Most apple trees are open pollinated, and thus will be a hybrid.

-P. Holloway

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HAVE A GOOD SUMMER. SEE YOU AGAIN  
IN SEPTEMBER!