

# ALASKA NAFEX NEWSLETTER

September, 1988

Vol 3 No. 7

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

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## MEETING DATES

Sept. 8. 7 p.m. National Bank of Alaska  
lunchroom (Northern Lights and C Street).  
Potluck. Speaker: Bob Purvis: Preparing fruit  
trees for winter.

Sept. 17. 1 p.m. Sat. Field trip to Palmer.  
Meet at the NBA parking lot. Visit Virgil  
Eckert's orchard at 2:30 p.m. Eckert Orchard is on  
a bluff overlooking the Glenn Hwy. Turn left at  
the Chevron Station going towards the Tsunami  
Warning Center. Eckert's is the 1st drive on the  
right. Visit Dearborn's Orchard at 4 p.m.. The  
Dearborn farm is 1.2 miles up the Trunk Road  
from the Park's Hwy.

Oct 6. 7 p.m. NBA lunchroom. Apple tasting  
party.

Nov. 10. 7 p.m. NBA Lunchroom. Slide  
presentation- Bob Purvis "Fruits in Alaska" (last  
chance to see all of Bob's slides).

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## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Delmore L. Schmidt.  
Box 2549  
Homer, AK 99603

Angela Green  
Mile 77 Richardson Hwy  
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Paul A. and Janet Irwin  
7141 E. 24th Ave.  
Anchorage, AK 99504

Clair Laamers  
1364 Esro Road  
Fairbanks, Ak 99712

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## A PLUM TREE IN INTERIOR, ALASKA

Vic Johansen, a Fairbanks NAFEX member, was perusing the fruit exhibits at the Alaska State Fair in Fairbanks this summer when he spotted an entry of ripe plums! He got the name of the entrant from the tag and called Roxanne Brahan who lives at 6.5 Mile Old Richardson Hwy, North Pole. Roxanne told Vic that her mother had purchased the plants about 12 years ago and called them Eskimo plums (Vic thinks they are the Manchurian plums) and planted on the south side of their house. The tree is now 8 feet tall and has approx. 3 inch diameter trunk. It has long arching branches and is quite spindly because it has never been pruned. It bloomed for the first time ever during the spring of '87, but none of the flowers set fruit. It is the first plant to bloom in the area, long before the chokecherries, while there's still patches of snow on the ground, and Vic thinks there are no pollinators around at that time. This past spring, it bloomed again and the owners sprayed the flowers with a chemical fruit set. By fair time there were hundreds of ripe fruit hanging from the branches. Vic says the fruit is tasty, sweet and delicious! Roxanne's entry in the fair was awarded only a third place ribbon. Would you believe chokecherries won first place? Maybe the judges couldn't believe they were grown here, especially in North Pole, one of the coldest spots in the Interior.

Vic also mentioned that he had harvested and eaten his first hardy kiwi ('Kolomikta' strain) on Aug 23. These were new plants that had just been set out this spring. They set 4 fruit, but one fell off. Vic planted the kiwis on the south side of his house, and the plants now have 4 to 5 shoots, each about 2 feet long. It remains to be seen if they survive their first winter in Fairbanks.

-Editor

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## MORE NEWS ABOUT HARDY KIVI TRIALS IN ANCHORAGE

I planted 3 kiwis last spring (1 male, 2 females) after reading a feature article in Harrowsmith. I ordered Actinidia arguta anasaya from Burgess as the article recommended this variety and the price was reasonable. I planted these along the south end of the house, mixing fishy peat potting soil and Magamp into the holes. Unfortunately, there is another house just 10 feet away, so there is a lot of shade there. I put up a visqueen wind screen. I grew the vines up tomato netting. The vines grew 5-8 feet tall over the summer after which I laid them on the ground and covered them with 6 inches of straw. This spring, I uncovered the plants in mid April (I couldn't wait any longer) and the male and one female had buds on them. I then, however, lost the male through freeze/thawing and the vine snapped in two. About 3 weeks ago, as the female was leafing out nicely, I noticed new shoots from both the male and other female. It's really nice being given a second chance! I decided the south end of the house gets too much shade from the neighboring house, and what I thought would be a protected area had turned out to be a wind tunnel, so I moved the plants about June 5 to the east side of the house where they're now growing nicely. There's another advantage in that they're now along a heated crawl space whereas the last spot was adjacent to a slab foundation.

Thinking I had lost 2 kiwis this spring, I proceeded to order 3 more. This time I ordered "arctic beauty" Kolomiktas from Northwoods Nursery's specialty catalog. They list varieties they had imported from Russia 2 years ago. I ordered a #2 Faviorskaya, a #7 Aromatnaya and a male pollinator. I chose these as they listed the earliest ripening times (early mid Aug for Oregon) The male came as a sturdy bare-root plant and had 4 blooms this summer. The females were approx. 6" potted plants. So far, the #7 is growing right along, but the #2 is just sitting there. These have also been planted on the east side of the house. I am very interested in hearing what other people report on kiwis as it would be great to actually get some fruit. -Leslie Toombs

Bob Purvis reported that he overwintered 3 healthy Actinidia arguta plants (two females and one male) outdoors under several inches of leaf mulch and a few feet of snow in a sheltered location. The female plants had 60 to 90%

winterkill but leafed out vigorously this past May. The male died. They were in pots containing perhaps 1/2 gallon of soil and were exposed to -11 F on one occasion. One Kolomikta plant died, but it was in an even smaller pot. -Editor

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## MORE WINTER SURVIVAL RECORDS

Rich Raynor reported no winterkill on his 'Van', 'Sam', 'Stella' and 'Hardy Giant' sweet cherries which are perhaps 3-5 feet tall. This was their 3rd winter in Alaska soil in west Anchorage. The 'Van' had one cluster of blossoms. All of these trees were on Mazzard rootstocks. Bob Purvis' 'Rainier' lost perhaps 10% of its 1987 growth to winterkill. He planted it in the ground in late Sept 1986, and it grew well this past summer. By contrast, Lawrence Clark's two 'Kristen' sweet cherries are in real bad shape though alive after 1 winter. Purvis' 'Kristin' is now dead after two winters.

Lawrence Clark's two 'Strathmore' apricots, bought in 1987 from Valley Nursery in Helena, MT, survived the winter outdoors in the ground with winterkill of about 10% of their 1987 growth.

Bob Purvis' 'Tyson' pear (on OHXF333) had no dieback whatsoever after its first winter outdoors, which was its second in Alaska. His 'Nova' pear (on P. communis) under identical conditions had winterkill of perhaps 3-5% of its 1987 growth. Both were in pots, as was his 'Waterville' pear (on P. communis) which in its first winter suffered 40% loss of its 1987 growth. This plant was slow to harden off in the fall.

Bob also warns that wrapping burlap around the trunk of apple trees may not be such a good idea. The burlap seems to hold moisture right next to the bark causing extensive bark splitting

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## A MEMBER'S QUESTIONS ON FERTILIZER

Have there been any studies on the effect of magnesium on fruit growing? I have heard that plants have a difficulty in getting magnesium from our cold soils. What is the origin of Magamp? Will epsom salts applied late in the season help ripen fruit faster?

Dr. Frank Wooding, Soils Specialist,

**Agricultural Experiment Station,  
Fairbanks replies:**

Insufficient magnesium does cause fruit to be small, poor in quality, and it may drop prematurely, but then this effect is common with a lot of other nutrient deficiencies. The main thing that lack of magnesium does is limit photosynthesis, so any other plant function (including flowering and fruit production) that relies on carbohydrate formation from photosynthesis will be affected. Magnesium is in good supply in Interior, AK soils, but researchers have seen some increased yields of forage crops (oats and brome grass) at Pt. McKenzie near Anchorage with added magnesium. Magnesium may be limiting on acid soils, very dry soils, and those that have been fertilized with an excess of potassium. Phosphorus (P) uptake is the most sensitive to cold soil conditions, and P is usually added in excess because uptake is so slow. Phosphorus strongly affects flowering and fruit production. Magnesium (Mg) and P are strongly linked together. P increases the uptake of Mg and Mg increases the uptake of P, so if you fertilize with Mg, you may get a benefit from the Mg, but chances are you are also aiding the uptake of P which would improve flowering and fruiting.

As for MagAmp, it is a mineral that has been processed and sold for at least 50 years, and is manufactured in the Midwest and South. It is a mineral that is mined from the ground and processed into fertilizer. Separate minerals are not combined for this fertilizer. It is a granular slow release fertilizer called Magnesium ammonium potassium phosphate. Each bag contains 7% nitrogen, 40% phosphate and 6% potash. The Mg in MagAmp probably benefits fruit production, but the other ingredients, especially the phosphate are probably more important.

Magnesium is water soluble and is easily transported in plants. There probably is no strong correlation between Mg uptake and soil temperature. What would slow nutrient uptake, however, is the plant itself. The entire process of nutrient absorption is reduced in cold soils, so Mg, along with many other nutrients are not taken up as readily.

Epsom salts is Magnesium sulfate. The benefit from Epsom salts may not just be from the Mg portion, but from the sulfur which is sometimes limiting in cold soils.

**PROGRESS ON APPLES IN  
FAIRBANKS**

During the time that Dan Whitney and I were in Fairbanks to conduct the grafting workshop, July 8-9, we had a chance to look at the plantings of three different people, as well as that of the University Experimental Farm.

At Walter Benesch's home, we found that two of his 'Norland' and two 'Goodland' apples which were planted in 1981 had fruit on them - the first time for both. 'Patterson' was bearing for him, too, as were the applecrabs, 'Kerr', 'Heyer 12' and 'Rescue'. The 'Rescue' and 'Kerr' were planted in 1985. Very appropriately, the 'Carroll' apple tree at Carroll Phillips' orchard has begun to bear. At the Experimental Farm, Dan and I saw fruit on all six of the 'Nor' series apples ('Noran', 'Norvue', 'Norda', 'Noret', 'Norhey', and 'Norson'), and the 'Trailman' applecrab had lots of fruit. -R. Purvis

**SEND FURTHER QUESTION,  
CONTRIBUTIONS, RECIPES, BOOK  
REVIEWS, NEWS ABOUT YOUR  
FRUIT GROWING EXPERIENCE TO  
THE EDITOR, PAT HOLLOWAY.  
YOUR EDITOR WANTS TO HEAR  
FROM YOU!**

**IR-2 REPOSITORY FOR FRUIT  
TREES**

The IR-2 repository is a collection of fruit trees maintained at the Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center, Prosser, WA. This organization maintains a collection of virus tested plant materials that, until this year, were available only to scientists for research purposes. Now, however, propagation material such as budwood is officially available to all who request it. The fees are \$0.50 per bud with a minimum of \$10.00 per order and 10 buds per variety. They also sell a limited amount of seed and rootstocks which are available at the prevailing commercial rates. The trees of some selections are small, so budwood supplies may be limited.

The great majority of their plant materials are not hardy in Alaska, but it may be another good source for obtaining virus tested materials at a reasonable cost. The list of cultivars includes almonds, apricots, peaches, ornamental peaches, nectarines, plums, prunes, sour cherry, sweet cherry, mazzard, mahaleb rootstocks, flowering cherry, lots of species Prunus, flowering and fruiting apples, many apple rootstocks and interstocks, flowering, and fruiting pears. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of their available germplasm, write to Pat Holloway.