

# ALASKA NAFEX NEWSLETTER

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

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## MEETING DATES

**MAY 11**, Thurs., 7 P. M.,  
National Bank of Alaska lunchroom  
July Riley and Herb James:  
Growing raspberries, strawberries  
and asparagus.

**JUNE 8**, Thurs., 7 P. M.,  
National Bank of Alaska lunchroom  
Beth Blitz: Pests and diseases of  
fruit crops.

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## PROSSER: VIRUS-TESTED PROPAGATING MATERIAL

By Robert Purvis

Recently, I sent for and obtained a listing of the virus-indexed fruit-tree scions in the IR-2 repository of the Ag Research and Extension Center at Prosser, Washington. Among apricots they have all the Har- series from Canada, Manchu, Scout, Goldcot, Puget Gold, and about 25 others. Among the hardy plums I noted three Canadian cultivars I've been searching for a long time: Assiniboine (a superb pollenizer and much harder than Toka), Brookred, and Brookgold. The last two are

from the Ag Canada Research Station at Brook, Alberta, and are pollenizer pairs, one of the other. Other hardy plums on the list include Alderman, Abundance, Convoy, Ember, La Crescent, Underwood, Toka, Superior, Waneta, and others from Minnesota.

The Prosser station has among its pie cherries: Early Richmond, Kansas Sweet, Mesabi (from Minnesota), Meteor, North Star and a few others. Rainier, Salmo, Hudson, Yellow Glass and Van are their hardest sweet cherries, it appears, along with the self-fertile sweet, Lapins.

## CANADIAN COMMENTS

By Robert Purvis

In February, I received a letter from Doug Woodard, 208 Russell Ave., St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W8. Doug is an active member of NAFEX and had much valuable information to share with me, which may be useful to other members of the Alaska Chapter of NAFEX. I've sorted out the information according to fruit type.

Concerning apples, Doug had considerable to say about Lobo, a McIntosh seedling found at the Experimental Farm, Ottawa, in 1906. Lobo keeps for a few months and ripens two weeks earlier than Wealthy, which suggests it would probably ripen or be well worth a try in the Anchorage bowl. Lobo was found to be fully winter-hardy and productive at Morden, Manitoba, which is in approximately the same climatic zone as Anchorage. Wealthy, in turn, ripens 6 days earlier than McIntosh at Vineland, Ontario.

Regarding apricots, Doug said that in the Prairie Provinces that Prunus sibirica, the Siberian apricot, was preferred to the Manchurian apricot as a rootstock: "It gives a smaller tree and fewer dormancy problems." He suggested Arthur Coutts (Box 539, Unity, Saskatchewan, S0K 4L0) as a possible source of the seed. Doug feels that Precious, Pushee and Shacklady, all of them apricots offered by Ken Taylor (Windmill Point Farm and Nursery, 2103 Perrot Blvd., Notre

Dame Ile Perrot, Quebec, J7V 5V6), would be good choices for our climate. They seldom fail to set a crop in Ontario. Ken's catalog, which he sent to me promptly when I requested it, is \$3.00 Canadian. It proved to be a wealth of information about fruits hardy in Quebec.

There is a pie cherry which Eddy Dugas (P.O. Box 172, Van Buren, ME 04785) has found, which like Meteor is an amarelle but slightly hardier. He describes it as equal to Montmorency in size—Montmorency grows with difficulty in that part of Maine. Its name is Dugas No. 1. Ken Taylor has a sweet cherry, "Quebec Bigarreau" or "Biga" for short, from below Quebec City. In Doug's estimation, it would be hardy in Anchorage. Biga is at least partially self-fertile and of commercial quality.

Doug also commented that reliable reports he has read indicate that sour or sweet cherries are noticeably hardier when self-rooted. This is perhaps not surprising—both Meteor and North Star are hardier than P. mahaleb or P. mazzard cherry rootstocks.

With his letter, Doug included some Beautiful Arcade (BA) apple seed. Dan Whitney is attempting to germinate and grow these for later use as rootstocks. For those wanting to buy their own, they should order from the Scotian Gold Co-op Ltd. (Attn. Mr. Russell Zwicker, Kentville, Nova Scotia B4N 3X2). The cost is \$10.00 Canadian per ounce; an ounce contains perhaps

1,000 seeds. The seed can only be ordered in September, and it is then shipped in November.

Beautiful Arcade is said to do well on heavy moist soils. It produces a tree about 85% the size of one grown on an ordinary domestic apple seedling. As an example of the beneficial effects that BA exerts on cultivars grafted to it, the Kentville Station says that Northern Spy fruits on BA in 5 years versus 10-12 on normal domestic seedlings. I have noticed that BA produces a very nicely shaped tree with wide crotch angles. The BA seed from Kentville is actually a cross of BA with An-tanovka.

Doug also mentioned that the Columbia Crabapple is generally preferred as a rootstock for the Prairies. Its ancestry is Siberian. Crabapple crossed with Broad Green, an old Russian apple not particularly hardy itself.

A last comment about cultural practices from an article by Harold W. Schroeder in Pomona in Review is that apples bearing a light crop may ripen 3-5 days earlier, while those with a heavy crop may ripen 3-5 days later than the average picking date. This is one more good argument for thinning fruit on trees in Alaska, especially those whose ripening times may be late in the season.

One last item of note: St. Catharines is where the 1989 national NAFEX convention will be held. It lies about 10-15 miles from Niagara

Falls and about 240-270 from St. Lawrence Nurseries.

## SWEATING IT OUT WITH TOKA

By Robert Purvis

On the first of May, I spoke with Lawyer Nursery about problems that chapter members were having with the Toka plum trees they'd shipped to us. Dan Lawyer, one of the officers of the corporation, spoke about a condition called "overdormancy" into which pear and plum trees sometimes slide, in which it is almost impossible to get their buds to break. When this happens, the cambium layer under the bark will be green, but the buds won't do anything.

Our Toka plums may be in this state. The way to deal with it is to soak the roots in water for 24 hours, then wrap wet burlap around the entire tree, and store it in a warm (65 to 70°F), dark place. Dan stated that light inhibits the process of breaking out of overdormancy.

These plums were stored after their arrival in Anchorage in a dark, cold place with only moderate moisture until members could pick them up. The good news is that Lawyer Nursery has promised to replace the trees at no cost to us. Still, the principles Dan spoke of are well worth remembering for the future.

## ANNUAL PRUNING WORK PARTY

By Helen Butcher

While we waited at 627 W. 20th Ave. for our leader, Bob Purvis, who was in demand elsewhere, 15 NAFEX members were treated to coffee and excellent rhubarb cake by Betty Anderson. Andy Anderson's Dolgo Crabapple still had string on it from supporting branches heavily laden with fruit last year. He had just dug up a May Day tree shading it, because the aphids were so bad last year he couldn't control them with spraying. He also has a Royalty Red Crabapple which bloomed beautifully last year, but aphids pretty well killed the flowering buds.

Many of Andy's trees are 2-year-olds, and include a North Star Cherry; Nanking Cherry; Manchurian Apricot; Anoka, Hazen and Summered Apple trees; and a Service-berry plant. At the October apple tasting, he liked a Red Duchess apple pie so he ordered a tree from Bells Nursery for \$23.00.

When Bob arrived, we learned how to prune branches that now or later would rub against each other, to locate the dominant central leader, and to tie down or spread other branches to shape the tree and admit more light.

Around the corner, Jim and Alberta Rigsbee have a 25+ year old, 16-17' Yellow Transparent Apple tree. Alberta said the tree was always

loaded and easy picking for her grandchildren. Bob, Karl Franke and Patrick Wright decided which branches to remove using shears and loppers. Branches that touch need to be pruned thereby opening up the inner tree for light and space. A discussion ensued as to which was the dominant branch, with no action to prune that problem.

At my house, we pruned a 9-10 year old unknown variety of apple tree. The tree had a 2 1/2 " diameter branch near the ground, possibly an offshoot below the graft since it was a little different in color, so we sawed it off. Again, where branches rubbed and crossed, down they went, along with any branch tips that slanted down above an outward facing bud.

The group looked at my Yellow Transparents, this time deciding which branch was dominant, pruned here and there, and advised tying down branches to shape the tree and prevent future problems with space and interlocking branches. The Summereds and the Beacon were fairly young and not much was proposed for now, except for training branches. We discussed fruit trees, raspberries and currants being pruned by moose. I served coffee and carrot cake to end the pleasant field trip on this sunny, warm spring day, April 29.

**ALASKA FRUIT CALENDER**  
**BY ROBERT A. PURVIS**  
**NORTH AMERICAN FRUIT EXPLORERS**

- Feb. 15 - April 15 - Harvest scionwood from trees which you want to propagate, Store scions at temperatures under 40°F, in a waterproof plastic bag. Keep moist but not wet.
- April 15 - 30 - Remove dead canes from raspberry bushes.
- April 30 - Prune apple and other fruit trees. Prune unwanted limbs and ragged limb ends back either to collar at trunk or to an outward-pointing, healthy bud.  
- Prune currants and goosberries.  
- Remove winter mulches from trees in yard or in pots.
- May 1 - 10 - Apply dormant oil spray if aphids, thrips, etc. were a problem last summer on your fruit trees. Remove Arborgards or tree wrap from tree trunks.
- May 10 - 30 - At first sign of changes in buds on apple trees, make field grafts. Cover grafts with opaque plastic bags.  
- Make bridge grafts if trees have been girdled by rodents.  
- Apply calcium nitrate (about 1.5 cups per tree per inch of trunk diameter) to soil around tree after first weeding out grass and weeds around base of tree.
- May 20 - 30 - Visit local nurseries to look at fruit trees or berry bushes.  
- Take note of how much winterkill is present on branch tips.  
- If soil is dry, water with warm water.  
- Insert branch spreaders in crotches to make wider crotch angles (ideal is about 45 to 60°.)
- June 1 - 15 - Make notes on blossoming sequence for bearing trees. If bees are not active or numerous, hand-pollinate blossoms on one tree with blossoms from another, different variety of apple or crabapple. One blossom will pollinate about six others.  
- Watch for thrips inside apple blossoms. A few may be fished out with a needle. If over a dozen are present, consider spraying in the evening with Diazonin.  
- Remove bags from field grafts after 2-3 weeks and see if buds are breaking on scions. If so, loosen bag to allow for air circulation. Remove bag when tiny leaves appear on graft.
- June 10 - 20 - Apply another dose of calcium nitrate and an equal amount of 8-32-16.  
- Remove any suckers growing vertically from limbs before they get any bigger, or attempt to train them more horizontally.  
- Weed around trees.

- June 30 - July 10 - Thin apples, pears, plums, or apricots when they're the size of a marble, to 1 or 2 fruits per spur. Remember that it takes 30 healthy leaves to properly nourish one apple. Thinning will produce larger fruits, prevent alternate bearing, and improve tree hardiness.
- July 10 - 20 - Slit tape on field grafts so they won't constrict the scion.  
- Apply light feeding of 8-32-16 and weed around trees.
- July 30 - Aug. 10 - Do summer pruning at this time.  
- Make repairs, if necessary, to moose fences or moose cages for fruit trees.
- August 15 - If weather is cool and wet, watch for powdery mildew (whitish bloom on leaves followed by their withering) and spray if necessary.
- September 1 - Begin checking on ripeness of fruit. It's best to pick some varieties (e.g., Norland, Yellow Transparent) when they're slightly immature. If frost threatens, don't pick apples or pears; they can withstand brief exposure to 20°F. Stone fruits (plums, apricots, cherries) will need frost protection or should be picked if temperatures drop below 26°F.
- September 25 - Remove branch spreaders.
- October 1 - 15 - Apply Arborgards or tree wrap to young trees for sunscald and rodent protection.
- October 5 - Harvest last apples.
- October 15 - Strip remaining leaves off fruit trees so they won't attract moose or catch snow.
- October 15 - 30 - After ground freezes slightly, pile leaves on ground around trunk and weight them down with a layer of grass clippings so they won't blow away (good for mulching young trees, but not important for old trees.)  
- If you're overwintering nursery stock in pots, find a shady, sheltered location and pile leaves over the pots, then weight them down with grass clippings.  
- If you have cherry trees and your site is windy, spray trees with Wilt-Pruf if temperatures are above 40°F.
- November 15 - Plan rootstock order for 1989 and phone it in to Lawyer Nursery or other source of hardy fruit rootstocks.  
- Remove heavy snow load from branches.
- December 31 - Deadline to order scionwood from Saanichton Plant Quarantine Station, Sidney, British Columbia.
- January 1 -31 - Place orders for nursery stock from "Lower 48" nurseries.