

# ALASKA NAFEX NEWSLETTER

A PUBLICATION OF THE ALASKA CHAPTER, NORTH AMERICAN FRUIT  
EXPLORERS (NAFEX)

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## MEETING DATES

April 12 Tree grafting party. 7 p.m. NBA lunchroom (NOTE CHANGE OF LOCATION FROM LAST NEWSLETTER!)

May Feeding, watering and soil testing for different fruit crops. Time/place TBA

June Seedling/rooted cutting exchange

September Seed gathering/winter preparations

October Fruit tasting

## FAIRBANKS TREE GRAFTING WORKSHOP-REMINDER

A tree grafting workshop is scheduled for Sat., April 7, 1990 in 301 O'Neill Resource Building, UAF West Ridge, 1:00 p.m.

## GRAFTING WORKSHOP IN HOMER

A grafting workshop is scheduled for April 22 at the Homer High School sponsored by the Community School Program. Contact Ted Reynolds for further information 235-6225.

## SUMMARY OF MARCH MEETING

At the March NAFEX meeting George Hedla gave a slide presentation and reported on his success with growing muskmelons in Alaska. George said that he knew of a student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks who did her master's thesis on muskmelons. In her thesis she stated that about 10% of the female blossoms set fruit. This is due primarily to the warmer, drier climate in the Fairbanks area which is better for pollination.

George said that man's best friend when growing muskmelons is wasps and bees, however, last summer they did not arrive until late August. Although he stated that he had lots of fruit, some of his fruit did not ripen because the wasps and bees arrived too late in the season.

A man named Dave Schorer from Homer was responsible for

getting George started raising muskmelons. Dave was able to double his production from his usual crop of 100 melons in one year when his neighbors had bees in his yard.

George also raises muskmelons in his greenhouse. This year he did not get any wasps and bees in the greenhouse and as a result did not get very many muskmelons. Two years ago he had a lot of bees in his greenhouse, and with the aid of the bees, his male muskmelon blossoms pollinated all his female cucumbers. This caused the cucumbers to become inedible and full of seeds.

He explained that when hand pollination is undertaken, care must be taken as there is a very short period of time when the flower is receptive to the male. It is when the flower is completely open that it will take. George said he has used a hormone spray and he felt this helps in hand pollination. If you have a bunch of male blossoms and no females yet, the hormone spray will encourage the female blossoms to come on. One quick spray is all that is needed. The hormones are sold under the name of tomato set or blossom set. Hormones do have herbicides that may damage plants so the spray must be used with care. Do not use this spray in the greenhouse.

When growing muskmelons outdoors, start them in the greenhouse before transplanting outdoors. George said that where he is located there are very favorable growing conditions so he starts his seeds about the 15th of April and sets them out about the 15th of May. Muskmelons can be grown in raised beds through clear plastic. When the melons are first set out, he suggested that a floating row cover be placed directly on top of the plant and then a double row cover (one small row cover on the inside and a larger row cover on the outside). As the weather warms up, remove the top row cover as there has to be air spaces between the row covers. This provides insulation. As the weather warms up in June, remove the inner row cover.

The variety of outdoor muskmelons that George raises is 'Minnesota Midget'. This variety was developed by the University of Minnesota and produces a melon about the size of a baseball. This is a very sweet melon that was developed for northern climates.

George claims that he is not really a fruit grower, however he does raise a few berries. He raised 'Harvest Gold', 'Canby' and 'Royalty' purple raspberries. The first year he exhibited his 'Harvest Gold' at the Fair for which he received



... best of show ribbon, the purple rosette. The following year about a half dozen people exhibited the 'Harvest Gold' and competition got too tough for George and he quit. Lawrence Clark gave George the start of his 'Canby' which is an excellent red raspberry. It has no thorns and produces a very large red berry. 'Royalty', although not really purple, is a good, tasty berry and is rather a novelty. It is so blood red that it is called purple in the nursery catalogs.

Since George is primarily a vegetable grower, he gave a slide presentation showing how he grew his vegetables in raised beds and covered rows.

-Erik Simpson

### **NAFEX NATIONAL MEETING**

The National NAFEX Organization will hold its annual meeting jointly with the California Rare Fruit Growers, Inc. at the Univ. of California, Davis from June 27 to July 3. Emphasis will be on new fruit crops, variety development and breeding. Three days of sessions on unusual fruits, their adaptation to commerce and domestic horticulture, breeding of totally novel forms of fruit, the issue arising from expansion of fruit culture beyond traditional commercial zones of production will be complemented by 4 days of tours of orchards and nurseries in California. For further infor-

mation contact: Ms. Shirley Humphrey, CRFG-NAFEX 1990 Meeting, Small Farm Center, University of California Davis, CA 95616.

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### **GROWING RASPBERRIES? WHICH WAY SHOULD YOU ORIENT YOUR ROWS?**

When you plant a row of raspberries, should the row run north to south so that each side of the row gets approximately the same duration and intensity of light? Or should the row run east to west so that there is a definite north and south side? Does it make any difference in fruit yield? Since we have such low sun angles during the summer, will you get more fruit on the south side of an east-west oriented row than on the north? Since the south side is warmer, do you get more insect pollinator activity on the south side? Will there be any fruit quality (flavor, color) differences? These are some of the questions that will be answered over the next 3 years at the Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station in Fairbanks. 'Kiska' raspberry plants were planted during the summer of 1989, and the fruit yield and quality will be monitored for the next few years to determine the best row orientation for raspberries.

During the first year, fruit was collected but yields were very, very low because the row



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