

# ALASKA NAFEX NEWSLETTER

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

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## MEETING DATES

Sept. 20, Thurs. 7 p.m. NBA  
lunchroom. Apple tasting party.  
Jay Dearborn will bring apples  
and also be the guest speaker.  
Members are urged to bring  
fresh apples and any baked  
goods like apple pies to share  
with everyone.

## MORE THOUGHTS ON STAKING

The June 1990 issue of ANN  
contained an article about the  
importance of staking young  
fruit trees. I would like to  
correct two errors I made in the  
article. First, the subject of the  
staking efforts was not pear  
trees, but 'Blushing Gold' apple  
trees. Second, the poles which  
the Sundquist orchard foreman,  
Gene Cox, used for staking were  
made of galvanized steel, not  
aluminum.

I revisited the Sundquist  
Orchard with Gene on June 16.  
Besides 'Blushing Golden'  
apples, he had 'Law Spur Red

Rome' apple trees growing on  
stakes alongside a row which  
were unstaked and planted at  
the same time. On the average,  
I estimated that the staked  
trees were 40% taller and wider  
than the unstaked ones. There  
was considerably more fruit on  
the staked trees than the  
unstaked ones. These 'Romes'  
were on dwarfing rootstocks  
and in their "second leaf"  
(second growing season) in the  
orchard. They were 1 year old,  
on 2-year-old rootstocks when  
planted and staked. Green  
horticultural tape was used to  
tether the trees to the stakes.

Gene told me that he had  
dug up a few staked and a few  
unstaked trees. After one  
growing season, he found a lot  
more hair roots on the staked  
than on the unstaked trees. He  
feels that is because the  
whipping action of the wind  
breaks the hair roots. Much of  
the increase in fruitfulness and  
tree size is, he feels, due to the

increased number of hair roots on the staked trees.

He routinely snips about 5-10% of the length of tree roots, especially if they have few feeder roots on them, before planting the trees. The cleanly-cut ends will soon generate lots of secondary and hair roots. (Note: if the root tissue is white inside, it's alive; if brown, it's dead).

I bought 1/2-inch diameter electrical metal tubing and staked many of the taller fruit trees in my own garden. It was available only in 10 ft lengths at about \$2.20 each, but that's a small investment for a \$10 - \$25 tree. Our yard in Pullman is quite exposed to the prevailing winds, so I feel this will help the trees considerably.

For staking young trees in Dan Whitney's orchard, we used bamboo. It is better than conventional wooden stakes because its surface is smooth and will not abrade the bark. We put the stakes close to the windward side of each tree. By doing so this early in the growing season, we hope to have taller, straighter, better-rooted trees for sale in 1991.

-R Purvis

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### BACK FROM SIBERIA

Cathy Wright and I returned from a trip to the USSR on August 25. We visited horticultural research stations in Novosibirsk (Vasknil

Agricultural Institute and the Soviet All Union Academy of Science), Barnaul (The Lisavenko Research Institute), Gorno-Altai and Chimal (Mountain Experiment Station) and the Moscow Botanical Garden. We collected nearly 150 different species of fruits and ornamentals, mostly as seeds for testing in Alaska. Presently, the seeds are being inspected at the USDA Plant Inspection Station in Seattle. We also established contacts with research scientists who are working in many areas of fruit breeding and culture. In the next few newsletters, we will try to share with you some of our experiences.

One NAFEX member asked us to collect some seeds or cuttings of a plant called **Schisandra chinensis**. We inquired about this plant at most of our locations, but saw only one plant at the Botanical Garden in Novosibirsk. The weather there seemed milder than most of interior and southcentral Alaska, and the growers had a very difficult time keeping this one plant alive. They call it 5-flavor fruit, but our guide only mentioned 4 flavors: the skin is sweet, the flesh, sour; the seeds, bitter; and when processed, the sauce is salty. In Siberia it is known as a medicinal plant for disorders of the nervous system. At the research stations

south of Novosibirsk where they were growing plums and apricots, no-one was growing this plant. The plant at the Botanical Garden was in poor condition, and we could not get cuttings or seeds, but we will

try to request seeds from the very large Botanical Garden in Moscow for future testing in southcentral and southeast Alaska. Below is a description of this plant compiled by Leslie Toombs. -P. Holloway

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Latin Name: Schisandra chinensis  
Common Name: Chinese Magnolia Vine  
Origin: North-east Asia and Japan  
Lowest Zone: 5  
Height: 25 ft.  
Climbing Method: twining  
D/E: deciduous  
Soils: fertile, well drained  
Sun/Shade: Prefers some shade.

Special Features: Attractive foliage, fragrant flowers, edible fruit.

Description: Leaves oblong, elliptic to 4 inches, glossy, denticulate or serrate. Flowers fragrant, 1/2 to 1 1/2", white or pinkish. Very brief flowering period. Berries edible, red, to 3/8", 6 to 23 per bunch. Male and female flowers on separate plants, both must be present for fruiting. Hardest variety of the species.

Why Selected: Despite this rather nebulous resource information, the Actinidia Enthusiast's Newsletter indicates that this vine is grown for food in the Soviet Union. According to Mr. Plocher whom I wrote in Minnesota, the plant prefers cool, wet summers, shade and "according to horticultural literature" grows to the treetops in Siberia.

Site Selection: Next to deck for flower fragrance, bird attraction to fruits. North side of fence, so base is always shaded. Negative: Snow very slow to melt here.

Disadvantages: Excessive cost. (Uncommon plant) In fact, these are priced beyond my reach. I am looking for seed, but haven't found any sources yet. Any ideas?

Cost: \$25/seedlings \$40/cuttings grown s&h:25% plus \$8 per plant 2nd day air

Source: Louisiana Nursery