

ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS' NEWSLETTER

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

October 1991

Vol. 6/No. 8

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Our October meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m., October 17, 1991, at the Dimond Greenhouses, 1050 West Dimond Boulevard (between Arctic Boulevard and Minnesota Drive), Anchorage. As this newsletter goes to press, our program is open, but we will be discussing the recent Anchorage Times article on member **Dave Crusey**, together with some of Dave's methods and successes, and the upcoming Alaska Magazine article on another of our members, **Jay Dearborn**. Come and join us for an evening of warmth, discussion, and information exchange. We look forward to seeing you there!

And speaking of Dimond Greenhouses, be sure and pass on your appreciation to **Wayne Leiser** for providing a wonderful meeting place for us this year! Thanks, Wayne!

1991 APPLE TASTING RESULTS!

ANCHORAGE – Dimond Greenhouses was the scene of our annual **Apple Tasting Event** last September 19, 1991—and what a scene it was! Apples everywhere! Jay Dearborn acted as our special guest host and brought several apple varieties from the Valley for our tasting pleasure. Other members brought different varieties from

their own crops, and we tried to taste them all. What follows are some brief comments on each of the apples we tried, together with the names of those folks who graciously shared their crop bounty with all those present at the meeting (20+ people). (Editor's note: I tried to jot down all the different comments I heard as we went along--apologies to those of you whose opinions differed from the more vocal members present! I marked certain apples with a "?" when I wasn't sure who provided them.)

Canada Red (?): Somewhat tart. Softer, slightly mushy; not as crisp as Summer Red. Very nice apple.

Chinese Golden Early (Jay Dearborn): Earliest apple in Palmer (August 10). Small apples. Softer, sweeter.

Geneva Early (?): Good. Distinctive flavor, purplish blush. Falls off onto ground early. Doesn't store well.

Hyer 12 (Karl Francke and Dr. Herb James): Sizes vary from tree to tree (can increase size of apples dramatically by thinning fruits). Tart! Great for pies. Keeps one month to six weeks in the refrigerator.

Mystery Apple I (Neal Fried): Real sweet; crisp; nice flavor.

Mystery Apple II (Anthony Route): Will improve your pucker!!!

Mystery Mantet (Jay Dearborn): Great!

Noran (Bob Boyer): Acidic, mushy.

Norda (Jay Dearborn and River Bean): Impressive apple, nice and sweet. Different taste. Stays crisp.

Norland (Kent Carlson and Dave Crusey): Great texture and flavor! Doesn't store, but makes good applesauce.

Norson (?): Heavy bearer with drooping branches. Acid taste, but nice flavor.

Oriole (River Bean): Really sweet! Great!

Parkland (?): Nice sweet apple, no tartness, real mild. Vigorous grower. Ripe around fair time.

Rescue (Jay Dearborn and Erik Simpson): Tart; good cooking apple crab.

Roda Mantet (Karl Francke): Not quite ripe yet (two more weeks?). Bright flavor, tangy. Stores well (until December or January).

State Fair (Patrick Wright): Lots of flavor; real sweet and juicy!

Summer Red (Jay Dearborn): Fine flavor. Will ripen after picking.

Vista Bella (?): Grafts easily. Great aroma. Nice flavor. Softer texture, not crisp. Doesn't store too long.

Wealthy (Karl Francke and Dorothy Emmons): Not ripe yet (a fall apple?).

Westland (Jay Dearborn): Nice big apple; can pick off tree early (mid-August). Doesn't keep well. Softer and not as bitter as Hyer 12.

Yellow Jay (Jay Dearborn): Small apples with nice flavor. Great off the tree. Juicy. Will watercore, but store until January.

Yellow Transparent (Dave Crusey, Patrick Wright, Erik Simpson, and Kent Carlson): Cooking apple, very good for pies (especially with raspberries mixed in). Softer in texture. Poor keeper. Kent Carlson's apple was especially good.

There were other apple varieties available for tasting (including **Hazen**, **Spartan**, and **Viking Crab**), but we ran out of time. Thanks to those of you who helped with cutting and passing out apple samples--and to those of you who brought refreshments! They were certainly appreciated!

If you have something you want to share regarding the apples we tried (or if you disagree with something printed here and want to share your opinion),

please send me a note and I will add your comments/corrections to the list. Special thanks to **Jay Dearborn** for hosting the meeting and providing all those apples. And thanks again to all of you who shared your apples with all of us! Yummmmm!

PREPARING TREES FOR WINTER

By Bob Purvis

During my April 1991 trip to Alaska, I visited Clair Lammers' orchard in Fairbanks. Clair commented that he has been spraying his fruit trees with "Wilt-Pruf", an antidesiccant used to prevent evergreens from drying out, and that it seems to prevent winter-injury to some extent. This technique is one I also tried out on pie cherry trees while I was still living in Alaska.

The buds of many of the stone fruits, especially pie cherries, apricots, and American hybrid plums, are small compared to those of apple or pear, and, as such, they seem more vulnerable to injury from drying winds than those of apple or pear. The best time to apply Wilt-Pruf would be after the leaves have fallen (or after you have stripped them off the tree), but while temperatures are above freezing. This suggests mid- to late-September in Fairbanks and mid- to

late-October in Anchorage and other parts of southcentral Alaska.

Application of Wilt-Pruf to fruit trees seems to have no ill effects, but whether or not it is truly helpful has not been proven by scientific research. If you try using it, consider spraying only one side of the tree and comparing how well the tree blossoms and leaf's out on that side versus the unprotected side.

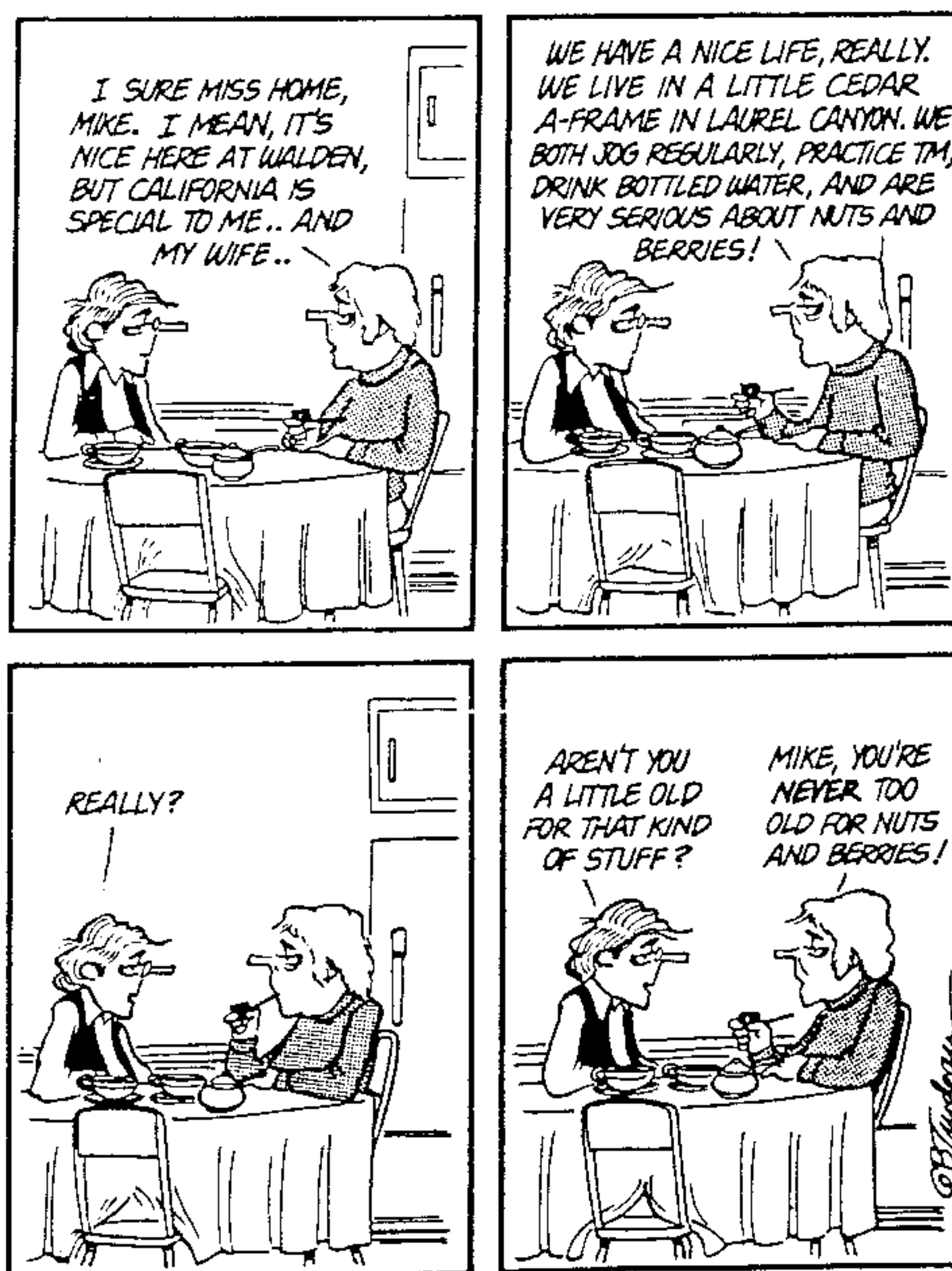
(Editor's note: If you try this method of protecting your trees this winter, be sure and send me your results so we can publish them in the newsletter. Thanks!)

At the national level, the North American Fruit Explorers (NAFEX) publishes a quarterly journal, Pomona; holds an annual convention; and has a library of horticultural reference works available to members at low rental costs. NAFEX also has a network of head testers for both the major and minor fruits and nuts. The national organization, founded in 1967, has as its purpose "to locate, test, and preserve superior or special fruit and nut varieties, unique cultural methods/materials, propagation techniques, fruit breeding procedures, adaptation of species and cultivars, and all other aspects of fruit growing". Our local chapter, founded in January 1985, shares the goals of the

national organization, but with emphasis on those relevant to Alaska. If you would like to join the national NAFEX organization in addition to our local chapter, but haven't been sure how to go about it, we have included a membership application on page five (5) of this month's newsletter.

With thanks to Leslie Toombs:

You're Never Too Old for Nuts and Berries



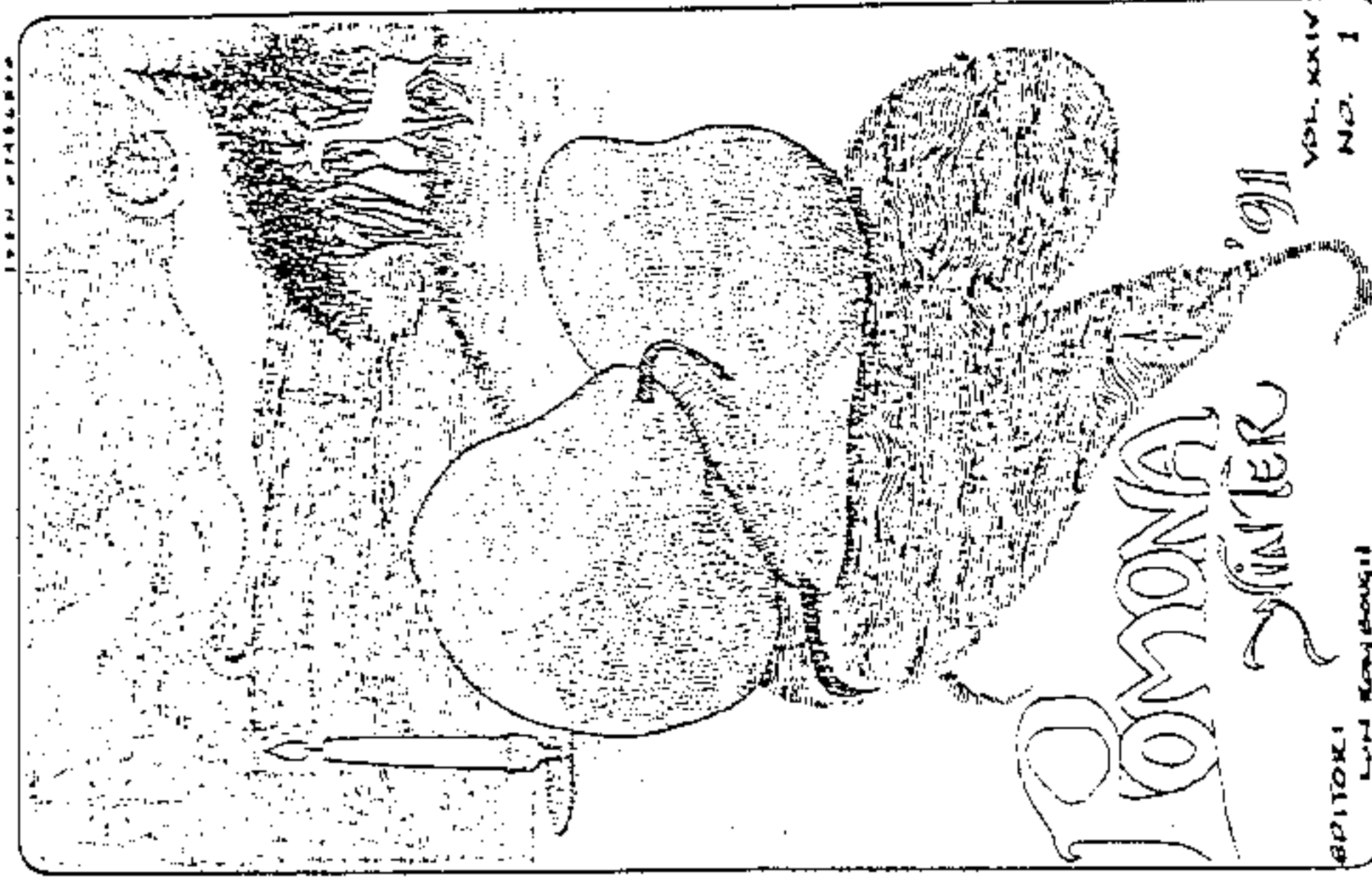
A Doonesbury Book • by G.B. Trudeau

NORTH AMERICAN FRUIT EXPLORERS, WHO ARE THOSE PEOPLE?

The North American Fruit Explorers (NAFEX) is a network of individuals throughout the United States, Canada and the rest of the world devoted to developing, discovering, cultivating, evaluating and appreciating superior varieties of fruits and nuts.

New members are provided with a hand book which explains in greater detail how NAFEX works. It also contains a how-to section for propagation and culture procedures, since most of the desirable plants are not readily available or, like pawpaw and persimmon, are difficult to move. Members quickly learn how easy it is to get a piece of scion wood and make their own tree.

For those who are particularly interested in one or more variety of fruit some 28 fruit testing groups have been established. While the activity and accomplishments of the various groups vary considerable they are usually the best source of information on what varieties are best for a given area and how to get them. This is particularly true for those trying to grow what is marginal for their area. The groups provide a place where interested individuals can work together to improve and evaluate many varieties of their favorite fruits.



MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please return this page with your payment.

☐ RENEWAL

If your address label says **LAST**,
renew now. Make address corrections to your label.

- ☐ 1 Yr (4 issues) U.S. \$8.00
- ☐ 2 Yr (8 issues) U.S. \$15.00
- ☐ Handbook (additional copies), \$5.00 each
- ☐ 1989 Membership Roster, \$3.00
- ☐ Index to Pomona - 1983 Through 1989, \$2.00
- ☐ NAFEX Library Booklist (with borrowing rules) \$2.00 ...
- TOTAL:**

For Canada and all other countries. To compensate for additional postage, please remit —
In U.S. Funds — \$12.00 for 1 year, \$23.00 for 2 years, \$6.00 for additional Handbook.

Payable in U.S. Funds to NAFEX.

Send to **NAFEX, Rt. 1, Box 94, Chapin, IL 62628**

☐ NEW MEMBERSHIP

Name

Mail Address

City, State ZIP

- ☐ 1 Yr (Handbook + 4 issues) U.S. \$11.00
- ☐ 2 Yr (Handbook + 8 issues) U.S. \$18.00
- ☐ Handbook (additional copies), \$5.00 each
- ☐ 1989 Membership Roster, \$3.00
- ☐ Index to Pomona - 1983 Through 1989, \$2.00
- ☐ NAFEX Library Booklist (with borrowing rules), \$2.00
- TOTAL:**

For Canada and all other countries: To compensate for additional postage, please remit —
in U.S. Funds — \$15.00 for 1 year, \$27.00 for 2 years, \$6.00 for additional Handbook.
Payable in U.S. funds to NAFEX.

Boulevard (between Arctic Boulevard and Minnesota Drive), Anchorage. Dick Green is going to repeat the presentation he gave in November at the 1991 Alaska Master Gardener Conference in Fairbanks for those of us not fortunate enough to attend that conference. Dick will speak on prize gardens and trees in other communities. Come and join us! We look forward to sharing one of the first evenings of the new year with you!

BIG NEWS! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

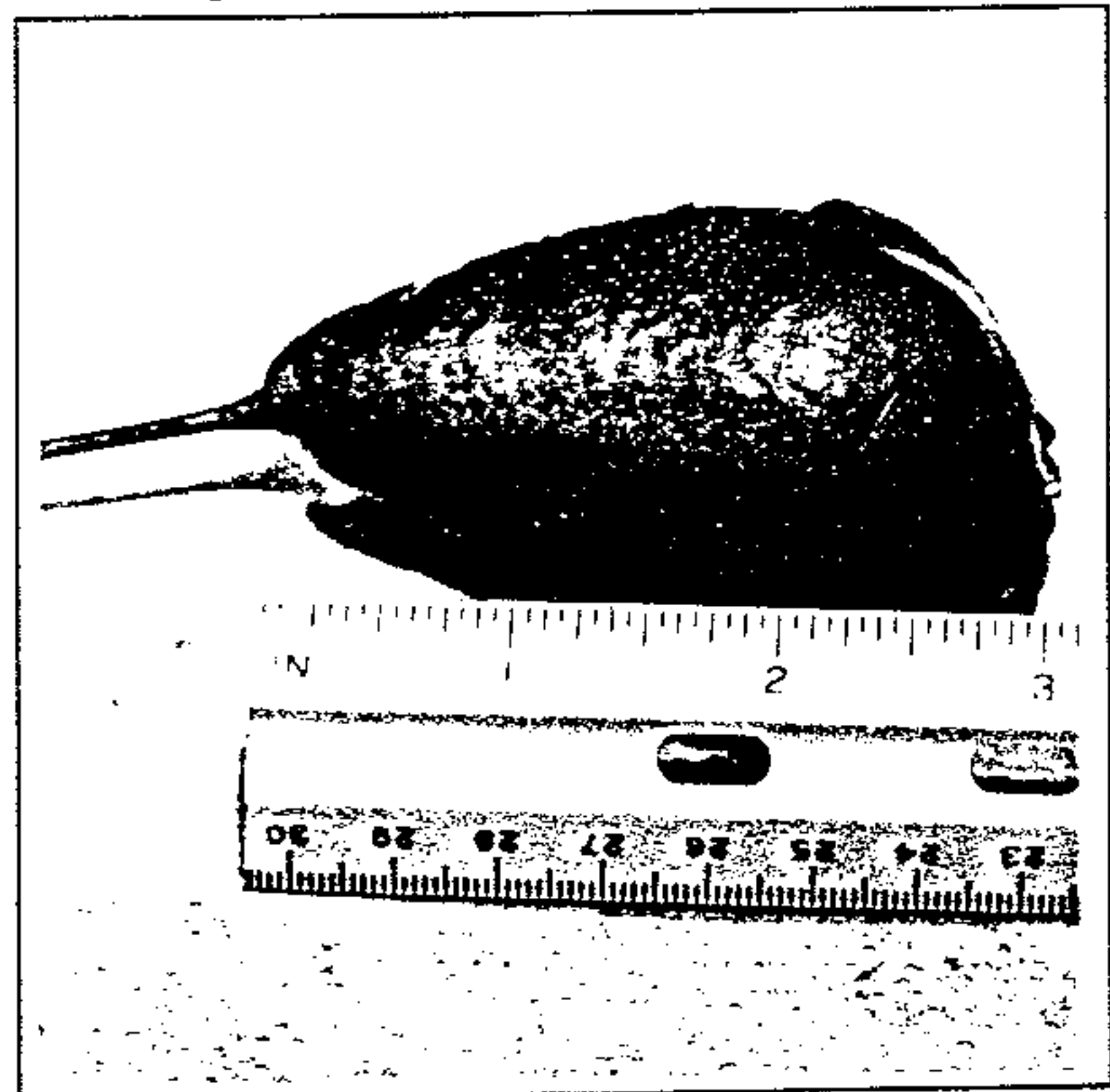
By Erik Simpson

Larry and Laura have successfully grown the first known edible pear in Alaska—and it happened this year!!! This is apparently a Patten pear tree which produced pears this past year in their yard in Anchorage, near Arctic Boulevard and International Airport Road.

The tree is planted in a location with a southern exposure and it is protected from the wind. Although the tree has never suffered any winter-kill, last winter a moose ate a fair portion out of the top of the pear tree. However, this last spring the tree grew back vigorously to about nine and one-half (9½) feet tall. There were about 75 blossoms on the tree this year, but a May

windstorm blew off about half of the blossoms before they could set fruit.

On October 12, 1991, Laura contacted me, as a representative of the Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers, in an attempt to identify the pear and determine how to ripen the fruit, which was still on the tree at that time. I was able to ripen one of the pears at room temperature by placing it in a plastic bag with two ripening bananas for seven days. The pear was three (3) inches tall and about one and three-quarters (1¾) inches wide with a pear/fig shape. The fruit was green speckled in color with a red blush. The pear had a long neck and rounded bottom, which prevented it from standing upright.



We tasted the pear at a Board meeting held on October 21, 1991. It had a creamy, buttery flavor with no apparent grit cells. The fruit was a little

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Phone 344-9749



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!

*We wish you Peace, we wish you Joy,
we wish you Health, and we wish you Bountiful Harvests
in this Holiday Season and
throughout the coming New Year!*

Your Board Members and Officers

As is our tradition, we will not hold a meeting in December. Rather, we hope you get to spend a warm evening with friends and family. However, we

want you back in January! Our next meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m., January 16, 1992, at the Dimond Greenhouses, 1050 West Dimond

dry and a little coarse because it had not fully ripened. This is the first edible pear known to have ripened in Alaska! We rated the pear at about a seven (7) to eight (8) on a scale of 10, and I would definitely recommend it! It should be picked when full-size, one (1) week before it's ripe.

This pear tree is at least nine (9) years old and is believed to have been purchased from Alaska Greenhouses, in Anchorage. Other pears sold by them at about the same time were the Clapp's Favorite and Luscious pears. It is entirely possible that there are other edible pears being grown in Alaska that we do not know about. The Ussurian pear (*Pyrus ussuriensis*) has produced pears in Fairbanks and Anchorage for more than 20 years, but the fruit is not edible. Parker pears were grown in Homer this year by **Delmore Schmidt**; however, they did not ripen—maybe next year. **Clair Lammers** and other fruit growers are also successfully growing Parker pear trees in Fairbanks, which may soon produce edible pears. I have an Arganche pear that has survived in Anchorage for three (3) winters with no winter-kill. I believe that the Ubileen, Ure, and Giffard are also definitely worth trying.

(**Editor's note:** There will be a very limited supply of scion wood available from this tree in the spring. Photo courtesy of **Bob Boyer**.)

ELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS/OFFICERS

A short general membership meeting was held at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 21, 1991, at Dimond Greenhouses, for the purpose of the election of Board members and officers for 1992. The following individuals were duly elected as your 1992 Board members and officers, respectively:

Erik Simpson, President
Bob Boyer, Vice President
Pam Neiswanger Warner, Secretary
Del Simpson, Treasurer

River Bean was duly elected to the position of fifth (floating or extra) Board member.

The meeting was followed by the regularly-scheduled November program, a videotaped presentation provided by **Bob Boyer**. Minutes of the meeting are available to anyone requesting a copy.

As an organization, we also want to extend a hearty and heartfelt "Thank You" to those who served this past year: **Dell Kuk**, Treasurer; **Pat Holloway**, Editor (forever!); and all those who presented programs at our meetings. Thanks for a job well done!

Fruit Cultivars
Available from Clair's Cultivations
Winter 1991-92

11-7-91

Dear Pam,

I really enjoyed chatting with you last night--I could go on and on when talking about fruit trees, thats why I call myself a fruit nut.

This is the list of 1 and 2 year apple trees that are available;

ADVANCE	HEYER 20	PARKLAND
ALMATA	JOHN WALLACE	PATTON
BEACON	KERR	RED SUMBO
BREAKEY	LOWLAND RASPBERRY	RESCUE
BREAKEY X CRISMON BEAUTY	LUBSK QUEEN	ROSTHERN 15
CENTENNIAL	MANTET	ROSTHERN 18
C.G.E.	MARTHA X DOLGO	SHAFER
COLLET	MELBA RED	SMOKEHOUSE
DOLGO	MORDEN 359	SUNNEYBROOK
DUCHESS	NORAN	SYLVIA
DYER	NORCUE	TRAIL
EARLY JOE	NORDA	TRAILMAN
FIRESIDE	NORET	UNITY
GARLAND	NORHEY	VALENTINE
GENEVA EARLY	NORLAND	VISTA BELLA
GIDEOR	NORSON	YELLOW JAY
GOODLAND	N.Y. 394	YELLOW TRANSPARENT
HARCOURT	ORIOLE	WESTLAND
HEYER 12	OSMAN	

Also have some Americana plum, Assinboine plum and Manchurian Blue plum

All of my trees are in "root control" bags, so therefore, they are NOT bare rooted.
All trees are F O B Fairbanks at \$15.00 each.(To NAFEX members only)

Sincerely



Clair J Lammers
1364 Esro Rd.
Fairbanks, Ak 99712
907-488-6446

WINTER RASPBERRIES

Reprinted from The Avant Gardener
October 1991

Raspberries are grown for winter harvest in greenhouses in Minnesota by Winter Fresh Fruits (Waconia, MN 55387), which grows the plants in containers with drip irrigation and integrated pest management, and ships the berries by air freight to wholesale markets nationwide and in Europe.

INDUCING BLOOM IN NANKING CHERRY

By Bob Purvis

Nanking cherry (*Prunus tomentosa*) has been grown as a substitute for pie cherry trees by Alaskan gardeners for many years because of its hardiness (zone 2—it has fruited in Fairbanks, as well as in Anchorage). Unfortunately, I know more than a few Alaskans who have had great difficulty getting their bushes of Nanking cherry to bear fruit.

Erik Simpson reports that an acquaintance of his tried the following technique when faced with the problem. He removed the last one-third (1/3) of the season's growth from his unfruitful Nanking cherry bushes in early- to mid-August. The following year, the bushes

blossomed profusely and set a good crop of fruit. Summer pruning, which this was, often has as one of its effects the channeling of nutrients away from branch tips (since they have, of course, been removed) and into the buds that remain, with the consequence that they oftentimes are more likely to develop into flower buds. It also tends to reduce somewhat the vigor of the bush or tree.

Other possible causes of unfruitfulness would include growing the bushes in poorly drained soil or in an overly shady location. Failure to provide adequate fertilizer, as evidenced by skimpy terminal growth or yellowing leaves, is another possible cause. A third is related to the fact that Nanking cherries are not self-fruitful. At least two (2) bushes are needed to cross-pollinate one another, but to be safe it would be wise to plant as many as five (5). They should be pruned to allow adequate penetration of sunlight into the interior, and spaced far enough apart—five (5) feet—to allow them to spread.

IT MIGHT BE ALL YULE NEED!

Membership in the Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers could be a most practical and pleasurable gift for your consideration this holiday season! The fruit growers, would-be fruit growers, and should-be fruit growers on your gift list might find membership different,

exciting, and enjoyable—not to mention receiving a newsletter that's full of useful information (and fun to read!) throughout the four seasons. Just send me your gift list (with correct addresses) and membership check and I'll be happy to announce your gift with a signed gift card and complimentary current issue of our newsletter. Please let me know how you would like your gift card signed.

EDITOR'S NOTES

"Thank you!" to all of those who have donated money to the library fund! We already have \$55.00 donated for use in Anchorage! Come on, you Fairbanksans, Southeasterners, and Peninsula dwellers—don't let the Anchorage folks outshine you in this important resource development project! All kidding aside, thanks again for your contributions!

And thanks to those of you who sent in early renewals of your membership for 1992—it certainly makes my job easier. If you haven't renewed your membership yet, I've enclosed another form this month. We're looking forward to a great year and don't want you to miss any of it.

Speaking of memberships, welcome to **Rudy Domke**, a new member from Fairbanks. Rudy's main interest is strawberries. He has been working since

1961 on locating hardy parent plants to cross and develop a better strawberry for the Interior. We also have a new honorary member in our group—**Roger Vick**, of the University of Alberta, Devonian Botanic Garden, in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Roger has published Edible Apples in Prairie Canada (Edible Apples to 1990: As Grown in the Canadian Prairie Provinces). Roger sent a complimentary signed copy of his book to our Alaska Chapter, NAFEX, in care of Erik Simpson. It has a wealth of information we will all find useful, and it shows top-rated and highly recommended apples and crabapples for the Canadian prairie provinces, where winters are long and harsh (sound familiar?). Thank you, Roger!

And I would like to close this year by saying "thank you" for the support you have given me, as your new editor. I was skeptical about taking this project over from Pat Holloway, who handled it so well for so long. Thanks again and best wishes for the holidays and new year—and keep those articles, cartoons, recipes, etc., coming in!!! See you next year!

