

ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS' NEWSLETTER

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

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

And May It Be A Grand One!!

Your Board Members and Officers

UPCOMING MEETINGS

January 16, 1992, 7:00 p.m., at the Dimond Greenhouses, 1050 West Dimond Boulevard (between Arctic Boulevard and Minnesota Drive), Anchorage. **Dick Green** will repeat the presentation he gave in November at the 1991 Alaska Master Gardener Conference in Fairbanks. Come and join us!

February 20,

1992, same time/same place. Program to be announced.

March 19, 1992, same time/same place. Program to be announced.

Please mark your calendars ahead so we can share your company on meeting nights! Hope to see you there!

HAPPY 7TH ANNIVERSARY AND A NOTE FROM THE PAST

I have been reviewing past issues of our newsletter in the process of producing an index of each year's articles. I found the following letter from **Bob Purvis**, first president of our Chapter, in the very first

An Invitation to Active Participation

The continuing well-being of NAFEX will now largely depend on how well it serves its members and how well its members serve NAFEX. As an amateur, volunteer organization, its success hangs always on the cooperation, enthusiasm, commitment, initiative, and individual contributions of all of us.

-- John A. Moore, founding member of NAFEX from Crawfordsville, IN
(*The Handbook for Fruit Explorers*).

Number 1, January 1, 1986) and have reprinted it here because I thought it was especially appropriate for this particular time of year and this particular issue of our newsletter. After reading the letter, I was inspired to take more responsibility for and ownership in this newsletter and I hope you are too! Happy Seventh Anniversary everyone—let's all contribute to help make it a great year!

(**Editor's note:** I have updated the letter by inserting current information where appropriate.)

"FROM THE PRESIDENT

This month (January) marks the first [seventh] anniversary of the founding of the Alaska Chapter of the North American Fruit Explorers. During 1985, the monthly announcement of meetings served also as a newsletter for sharing items of importance with members of the Chapter.

In December, I contacted **Pat Holloway**, assistant professor [now associate professor] of horticulture at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. Pat has been quite interested in publishing a monthly newsletter for the Chapter. This issue is the first she has put together.

She and I have decided, with some input from other club members, the when, what, and why of having a newsletter. The "why", or purpose, is to serve as a means of linking our members who are spread from Fairbanks to Juneau [we're now spread from Fairbanks to Oregon, Homer to Edmonton!]; to pass on or share information useful or interesting to fruit

growers; and to announce meetings, activities, projects, and so forth of the Chapter and perhaps related organizations, such as the Cooperative Extension Service, garden clubs, etc.

We hope in this newsletter also to summarize the past meeting (for those who could not attend), announce future meetings, mention club needs, and perhaps give abstracts of especially interesting articles from other sources, an occasional book review, and maybe a profile on a club member. Addresses of nurseries and suppliers of fruit-related material may also be given.

We would encourage club members to submit information and articles they feel would be useful or interesting to others for publication.

Receipt of this newsletter should be considered as a privilege of membership in the Chapter. Most of the dues you pay go toward meeting the expenses of mailing out this publication.

We wish Chapter members a Happy New Year 1986 [1992] and a long, warm growing season, as well as much success with planting, pruning, grafting, and other horticultural activities!

—Robert Purvis"

GARDEN AND FRUIT GROWING REPORT

By Gerald L. Sudkamp

The following is a report of my garden and fruit growing activities for the last five (5) years at a lot I have near Wasilla. This report begins when I purchased a 2.8-acre lot, located about 10 miles northwest of Wasilla on Pittman Road, in the late fall of 1987. The lot runs southwest from Pittman Road at a slight downhill slope 600' to Island Lake, and borders Pittman Road and the lake by about 250' (rough estimates).

Starting from Pittman Road, half the lot is a birch woods. Then there is a knoll (where I am building a house) and slope that are cleared of trees leading to a meadow, then bog, then lake. You might say the lot is 1/2 woods, 1/4 knoll and slope, 1/8 meadow, and 1/8 bog. My fruit and garden efforts have been focused on the knoll and slope, which have good southern exposure.

A profile of the soil shows a thin topsoil that varies from loam to clay to sand, then 3'-4' of sand, then hardpan glacial till. There is usually enough sand mixed with the topsoil to make it easy to work. However, it is not very fertile and needs a little fertilizer to get things to grow.

In the spring and summer of 1988, I cleared the knoll and slope area. This involved pulling up knee- to chest-high birch trees. If I waited until after a good rain, the trees would pull up, root and all. That fall I transplanted the following as rooted cuttings, runners, reproductions, etc., from my place in Muldoon to

Island Lake: Latham raspberries, Quinalt strawberries, Pixwell gooseberries, Red Lake currants, Swedish Black currants, Saskatoon berry, rhubarb, mint, chives, and a Dolgo crab tree. These were all proven hardy plants and did well; they are now well established.

In the spring of 1989, I purchased and planted the following apple trees from Bob Purvis: one (1) State Fair, one (1) Glen Orchie, and one (1) SummerRed, all on either *baccata* or Antanovka rootstock. These grew well that summer and fall, but the infamous winter of 1989-90 got the Glen Orchie and the other two (2) died back to the rootstock. I think that if they would have had more time to adjust to our Alaskan climate before such a cold winter, they might have done better.

In the spring of 1990, I planted a hedge of Nanking cherries (12 plants), a bed of Redcoat (Canadian) strawberries, and some native American plums (6). The Nanking cherries are growing well, but have not blossomed or produced fruit.* I am impressed with the Redcoat strawberries—a June bearer. The berries are large, firm, sweet, and good keepers. The plants are productive, vigorous, and seem quite hardy—having gone through one winter without any protective cover. I decided to try the native American plums first. If they didn't do well, I would forget about trying cultivar plums. If they proved out, I could use them for rootstock. Half of them did not survive the winter. The three (3) left continue to grow, but not vigorously.

In the spring of 1991, I planted two (2) elderberries (John's and Adams), an asparagus bed from Doctor James' starts, and some Fall

Gold raspberries. The John's elderberry started right off, but the Adams did not break dormancy until late summer. The asparagus (24 plants) was planted in a raised bed with a black plastic mulch to keep the weeds and horsetail down. They all survived and grew throughout the summer. The everbearing Fall Gold raspberries bore lightly in the fall. It will take a few more growing seasons to better evaluate the spring 1991 plantings.

(**Editor's note:** Last month's newsletter [December 1991] contained an article by Bob Purvis entitled "Inducing Bloom in Nanking Cherry".)

CHERRY PLUM REPORT

By Clair J. Lammers

This year I had good success with growing and ripening four (4) varieties of cherry plums in the interior of Alaska. The following is a brief description of each:

Hiawatha: Fruits are 1" long and almost 1" in diameter and are dark red; the flesh is purple-red. Ripened in Fairbanks by September 6, 1991.

Manor: Low-growing bush-type, fruit red with purple flesh, good for eating out-of-hand. Fruit size is approximately 1½" long and 1¼" in diameter. Ripened in Fairbanks by September 5, 1991.

Opata: Fruit is green with red-purplish overlay, medium tender, yellow-green flesh, juicy, sweet

flavor, and good dessert quality. Fruit size is 1½" by 1¼" in diameter. Ripened in Fairbanks by September 5, 1991.

Sapa: Fruit is dark red with deep red flesh, juicy and sweet, good for eating out-of-hand and for preserves. Fruit size is 1¼" by 1" in diameter and ripened in Fairbanks by September 7, 1991.

My own personal taste test of the four (4) varieties (on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being best) are: Opata, 10; Manor, 9; Hiawatha, 6; and Sapa, 3.

The following varieties of cherry plums are being replaced in the spring, as their fruit did not ripen during our short summer. This was the second year they produced fruit, but did not get ripe. They are: Compass, Oka, Red Diamond, and Sapalta.

1991 INDEX AVAILABLE

The annual index to the 1991 issues of our Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers' newsletter, covering Volume 6, January 1991 through December 1991, is now available.

We ask that any reader wishing a copy of the index send a business-size, self-addressed, stamped envelope to **Pam Neiswanger Warner**, 7000 Viburnum Drive, Anchorage, AK 99507. As I complete the indices from 1986-1990, I will publish their availability here—or if there is enough interest, I will publish the indices in the newsletter as they are completed (please let me know your thoughts on this). If there is an

article you want repeated or copied, just let me know. Thanks!

APPLES FOR ALASKA: DON'T FORGET THE CLASSICS

By Leslie Toombs

In trying to grow bigger, better, hardier, and earlier fruit, it is exciting to acquire and plant each new apple variety as it is released from the experiment stations. While new fruits suitable to our Alaskan climate will be discovered in this way, we should not overlook the historic apples suitable for the north. These apples have withstood the most difficult test facing any product—the test of time.

The Apples of New York, published by the State of New York Department of Agriculture in 1905, is still considered by many to be the most comprehensive publication available describing hundreds of apple varieties. *The Apples of New York*, available for loan from the NAFEX library, is split into two (2) volumes. Volume I describes the winter apples, and Volume II the summer and fall apples. Each variety is described in detail, with its virtues and faults outlined. The volumes provide the history of the variety, known synonyms for the name, and beautiful half-tone and color photo engravings of the fruit. The photographs are especially useful, as you get a good look at the size, shape, and general appearance of the apple. The Yellow Transparent shown even had a worm hole in it, which I especially enjoyed as this is something you would not see published today.

I have photocopied the pages describing what the book labels as "the four pioneers among Russian apples in America" and hope that these can be featured in our newsletters as space permits.* The apples featured are Alexander, Duchess of Oldenburg, Tetofsky, and Red Astrachan. All of these apples should thrive in our climate. Even the smallest, the Tetofsky, is over 2 inches.

The Alexander and Duchess of Oldenburg may be purchased from Bear Creek Nursery, P. O. Box 411, Northport, WA 99157. The Duchess of Oldenburg, Tetofsky, and Red Astrachan are available from St. Lawrence Nurseries, R.D. 2, Potsdam, NY 13676.

(*Editor's note: I will be sure and make room for these extracts in the coming months—and thanks, Leslie!)

PAYMENT OF 1992 DUES REQUESTED

During 1991, 85 people/families were dues-paying members of our Chapter. Our annual dues were \$10.00 per year and will remain at \$10.00 per year through 1992. It costs approximately \$27.00 just to mail each month's newsletter (not counting the volunteer labor pressed into service to collate, staple, and lick stamps [yuck!]**—thank you, Doug and Keary!**—and the contribution of copying services which our Chapter is currently enjoying). We are, however, mailing newsletters to another six (6) or seven (7) people/organizations who are not members in the hope they might attend a meeting, in order

to exchange information, and in an effort to promote our Chapter. The club officers, therefore, request that each member wanting to maintain their membership (and continue receiving the newsletter) send in their membership renewal form and dues as soon as possible—I've enclosed another membership form this month. If I haven't already heard from you, I hope to hear from you soon. We're looking forward to a great year and don't want you to miss any of it!

(*Editor's note: Please see the back of this month's membership application.)

Page 48 of the January 1992 issue of *Sunset Magazine* has a very good article entitled "Pruning Your Fruit Trees: Essential Basics". It covers eight (8) different fruit trees. If you haven't seen this article, you might want to pick up a copy of the magazine before it's off the stands.

The "quote of the month" on the first page of this month's newsletter was meant sincerely—we are an amateur, volunteer organization and your Board members are always looking for ways in which our Chapter can better serve its members—you. So, if you have a suggestion for how we could do something better, an idea for something we might do that we're not doing now (or, especially helpful, if you have ideas for programs you would like to hear presented*), or even a complaint, please drop one of us a note or a postcard and we will attempt to better serve your wants and desires. Let us hear from you—and make us earn our titles!