

ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS' NEWSLETTER

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MEETING SCHEDULE

Thursday, November 19, 1992, 7:00 p.m., at the Dimond Greenhouses, 1050 West Dimond Boulevard (between Arctic Boulevard and Minnesota Drive), Anchorage. Wayne Leiser will be speaking on greenhouses in Alaska, so bring a friend and join us there! It should be an enjoyable and informative evening.

Please set aside **January 21, February 18, March 18, April 15, and May 20, 1993** (the third Thursday of each month—no meetings in December), 7:00 p.m., for our meetings. Member participation is the secret of a "growing" organization, so mark your calendars now and plan on attending. Hope to see you there!

PREPARING YOUR FRUIT TREES FOR WINTER

By Bob Purvis

Getting a 1- or 2-year-old fruit tree to survive an Alaskan winter is not an easy task, even if the tree is a hardy Canadian apple variety on an Antonovka or Ranetka rootstock. With winter almost here, it may be worth outlining practices that improve the odds of tree survival. These were developed during my nine (9) years of growing apples in Alaska and watching the successes and failures of others.

Possibly the hardest thing is to induce the young tree to go dormant in a timely fashion. Applying slow-acting sources of nitrogen in August or September (e.g., steer manure) is a grave mistake. As a rule, and especially in the first year, no fertilizer should be applied after mid-July. In view of the sharp increase in

rainfall from July to August to September, I advise not watering the tree after August 1 unless there is a period of sunny, dry, warm weather and it appears obvious that the soil is drying out.

Sunscald is a bark injury resulting from direct sun shining on and thawing the sap in the lower part of the tree trunk in late winter and early spring, if the thawing is followed by rapid freezing. The subsequent rupture of capillaries in the cambium (living tissue layer) under the bark can result in the bark coming loose and later tree death. Protection from sunscald is very important for young apple, crabapple, pear, and mountain ash trees because of their thin bark. White plastic tree guards applied in early October and removed in early May are the best source of protection from both sunscald and rodent damage. Unlike burlap or paper, they do not maintain a continually wet

surface in contact with the tree bark during wintertime thaws and break-up, which may promote rotting of the bark.

Protection of the roots is best done by mulching the soil out 1-2' from the base of the trees after the soil freezes and after applying the tree guards. I say "after" because the materials which are best suited for mulch, dry leaves held down by a layer of grass clippings or spruce boughs, can otherwise provide a great home for mice during the winter months. The layer of mulch should be at least 4" thick. Its purpose is not to keep the ground from freezing, but rather to prevent the ground from alternate freezing and thawing during the winter months. The mulch should be removed as soon as the snow melts so that the sun can warm the ground.

During the winter of 1991-92, Anchorage experienced unusually heavy snows, resulting in breakage of a number of branches on bearing fruit trees. To cope with this situation, I strongly advocate training the tree to a central leader and staking the leader. When the tree initiates branches in the spring, encourage them to form at least a 40-45° crotch angle by inserting toothpicks or clothespins in the crotch while the wood is still limber; these are structurally sounder under heavy snow or fruit loads than narrow crotches. In mid-October (October 10-20), if

your trees have not dropped their leaves, it's a good idea to strip them off by hand (the leaf blades are what catch the snow; the petioles [stems] of the leaves can be left). Lastly, shake the snow off your trees as it falls if the snowfall is wet, heavy, and deep. It takes only minutes to do this, but it takes months or years to grow a replacement branch!

Provision of protection from moose-browse damage is something which should be done at the time the trees are planted. My personal experience was that for a few trees, building enclosures or cages of 2x2's and chicken wire around the trees worked quite well. For a larger planting, I found that a 7½'-high welded-wire fence, supported on metal T-posts, worked quite well in keeping the moose out. If rabbits are a problem, such a fence should be extended down to ground level.

One last precaution which would probably help with bud survival on cherries and other stone fruits is to spray the tree branches with an anti-desiccant such as Wilt-Pruf or Vapor-Gard so that winter winds do not dry out the tree and buds when the tree is unable to take up water.

In the fall of 1988, I was faced with overwintering a large number of fruit trees in pots. I built an enclosure about 5' high, but open to the sky on the back

of my greenhouse; put all the trees in their pots inside it; and after the ground froze, I applied tree guards and a heavy layer first of dry leaves, then of grass clippings to hold them down. Under these conditions, hardly any trees died or suffered severe winter injury after exposure to -34°F. The trees in pots included not only apples, but also a Ure, a Hudar, a Nova, and a Tyson pear, plus 2-year-old trees of Toka and LaCrescent plum. All of these survived, howbeit there was some winter injury on the pears.

In summary, preparing fruit trees for winter involves proper management of fertilizer and water; proper training and support of the tree branches and trunk; removal of leaves; and protection of the bark from sunscald, the roots from alternate freezing and thawing, and the entire tree from moose and rodents. This may sound like a lot of work, but remember that with each winter your tree survives, the odds of further survival are increased, and the fruit it ultimately bears will be more tasty and fresh than most you can buy in the supermarket.

And speaking of moose, Betty Cloud, of Kenai, offers the following . . .

I have a tip for moose repellent. It has worked very well

or me. Last year, I had three (3) cows and five (5) babies in my yard off and on and all at one time. Every bush, tree, or plant I had treated was left intact—no samples taken!

Blend two (2) eggs with water in a blender. Put this mixture into a gallon milk jug and fill with water; 3-4 days later it is ready to put in a spray-type container for spraying your lilacs or anything else! The first year I did this, I did it often, especially after hard rain. Now, I don't have to do it as often. The moose seem to pass up things they have found unpleasant in the past. Be sure you check wind direction before you spray. Once it dries, people don't know it's there.

I am 30 miles out of Kenai, out past Nikiski—these animals are not wandering the streets of Kenai. I have not tried this on cabbage, etc. I use reemay cloth and it helps a great deal.

I also continue the Fairbanks trick of planting my carrots in October, just before freeze-up, under reemay cloth. It works great. They sprout faster than spring-planted seeds.

I enjoy all the tips and information on plant trials. We have lived in Alaska for 40 years and wasted a great deal of money trying different trees and berry bushes. This association helps cut

the time we waste on things doomed to freeze-out. Hope you had a great summer!

1992 APPLE-TASTING RESULTS (Southcentral)

This was a strange year for growing apples ... the beautiful early weather, the cool later weather, volcanic ash. Ripening dates in the Mat-Su Valley were two (2) weeks ahead of schedule, Anchorage was two (2) weeks behind. And although there were some excellent-tasting apples at this year's apple tasting, the general consensus was that this year's crop was not up to last year's high standards.

Many thanks to Doris Dearborn, who traveled from the Valley on a *miserable* evening with a wonderful variety of apples for our tasting pleasure! And thanks to those folks—River and Sarah Bean, Bob Boyer, Helen Butcher, Karl Francke, Tom Marshall, Arvid Miller, and Erik Simpson among others—who shared their bounty with the rest of us!

Taste is such an individual matter; however, here is a compilation of the taste ratings and comments we assigned to each apple tasted (on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the best—and as you can see, people's tastes vary):

Unknown/Hazen? (Dearborn): 5, 2, 2, 7, 3, 3, 3 (tart to sour, not ripe).

Westland: 10, 4, 4, 8, 4, 5 (spicy, delicate, and sweet to bland).

Norland (Dearborn): 9, 6, 9, 10, 8, 7, 6 (sweet, soft, juicy).

Parkland: 8, 8, 8, 4, 8, 6, 6 (sweet, good flavor, picked early).

Geneva Early: 10, 8.5, 7, 6, 9, 6, 7 (slightly tart to sweet).

Chinese Golden Early: 7, 7, 8, 4, 10, 10, 9, 4 (pithy texture, good flavor).

Rescue: 8, 7, 7, 10, 7, 9, 5, 6 (tart, good for applesauce).

Norda: 6, 6.5, 6, 6.8, 5, 7 (tart to bland, weak flavor).

Norland (Simpson): 7, 8, 10, 8 (crisp, sweet).

Unknown/Geneva Early? (Bean): 8, 7, 7, 6, 5 (firm, sour to good taste).

Yellow Transparent: 9, 7.5, 8, 10, 8, 8, 4 (banana-like flavor, slightly soft, sweet).

Novosibirski Sweet (Marshall): 4, 8, 7, 1, 5, 8, 5, 5 (bland to sweet, semi-bitter skin).

Rescue (Simpson): 6, 8, 5, 10, 6.9, 8 (tart, very good).

Oriole: 5, 6.5, 4, 4.2, 6, 5, 5 (soft, slightly tart to slightly sweet).

Norda (Bean): 8, 9, 6, 5.9, 6, 6 (very flavorful, sweet yet tart, juicy).

Heyer 12: 5, 3, 7.3, 5, 4 (sour, tart, not ripe).

Norland: 8, 6.5, 7, 5, 8, 7 (very mild).

Mantet (Boyer): 7, 5.5, 7, 4, 6 (tart to sour, not impressive).

15th Avenue Mystery (Boyer): 5, 6.5, 7, 6.3, 5 (tart to sour, strong flavor).

Unknown (Route/Boyer): 5, 3, 1, 1 (bitter, dry).

Golden Transparent (Butcher): 9, 8, 8, 8, 8, 6 (aromatic, sweet, soft).

Beacon: 6, 8.5, 5, 10, 5, 6 (flavorful, not quite ripe).

Unknown crab: 8, 7.5, 6, 7, 8.1, 5, 5 (good, high pectin, tart).

Unknown crab: 5, 1, 5 (sour, high pectin).

Unknown sweet (Francke): 9, 7.5, 10 (good texture, sweet, aromatic).

Noran (Boyer): 9, 7.5, 9, 9 (good flavor, tomatoey, nice texture, juicy).

Heyer 12 (Francke): 8, 8, 9, 5 (flavorful, but not ripe).

Summer Rambo (Boyer): 7, 6.5, 8, 10, 8 (tough skin, bland to sweet flesh, soft, juicy).

Ginger Gold (Boyer): 8, 7.5, 9, 10, 3, 9, 9 (very mild, sweet, good).

Rhoda Mantet: 5, 5.5, 4, 7 (sour, green).

And then there was Arvid Miller's splendid red crabapple-sauce and all the wonderful fruit desserts (not to mention Bob Boyer's mustard/honey bread and deer liver pate)—a perfect ending to an enjoyable evening. If you missed it this year, resolve to be there next September!

EDITOR'S NOTES

Your Board members would like to direct a hearty "Thank You!" to those members who contributed to our library fund in 1992. We now have approximately \$160.00 with which to begin building a lending library—and several members sent along title suggestions for our first purchases. Keep an eye on the newsletter and we'll let you know when the books become available for lending. We are, of course, still accepting contributions.

Speaking of newsletters, have you been wondering lately if yours were getting lost in the mail? Does it seem as though it's been months since you received your last issue? The truth is, our newsletter schedule *has* been drastically changed. As I noted in our last newsletter (MJJ 92), our organization has been the beneficiary of free copying services for the last year or so—the receipt of which has been a valuable gift to all of us, a gift we perhaps didn't recognize until it was gone. The MJJ 92 issue cost us approximately \$118.46 to print and distribute (14 pages x \$0.05/copy x 93 newsletters = \$65.10 copying costs + \$0.58 postage/piece x 92 pieces = \$53.36 circulation costs). You can easily see that the production and distribution of 10 newsletters/year is now cost-prohibitive—especially when our dues remain at \$10.00/year. You may remember that I asked for your input regarding this problem in the last newsletter. I have not heard from anyone. Your Board needs some direction from you regarding this problem we all share. We can go to a quarterly newsletter, we can raise our dues, or we can suspend newsletter production. What do *you* prefer? Do you have any other solutions? Is the newsletter useful to you? Please contact one of your Board members with your thoughts and advice—all opinions and suggestions are welcome.
[Continued on page 6]

EDIBLE TREE FRUITS PRODUCED IN ALASKA

APPLES/CRABAPPLES

(88 varieties)

Top Quality Apples

(Overall Quality Rated as 9.0 to 10.0 on a Scale of 1-10, With 10 Being Best)

Boyer Mystery Apple (A), Carroll (FV), Mantet (AV), Noran (A), Norda (AFV), Norland (AFV), Oriole (AV), Parkland (highest rating at 9.5/AV), State Fair (AV), Viking (A).

High Quality Apples

(Overall Quality Rated as 8.0 to 8.9 on a Scale of 1-10, With 10 Being Best)

Centennial (F), Geneva Early (AV), Gertrude (F), Hazen (A), Jacques (crab, AF), Norcue (A), Norson (A), Northland (A), Patterson (FV), Red Dolphin (F?V?), Renown (F), Rescue (apple-crab/AV), Summerred (AV), Vista Bella (A), Westland (A).

Good Quality Apples

(Overall Quality Rated as 7.0 to 7.9 on a Scale of 1-10, With 10 Being Best)

Adam (crab/V?), Adanac (V?), Almata (A), Anderson (V?), Annis (rootstock/A), Anoka (V?), Antonovka (rootstock/AFV), Baccata (limited compatibility rootstock/AV), Battleford (AF?), Beacon (A), Beautiful Arcade (rootstock/A), Borowinka (rootstock/A), Brookland (F), Chestnut Crab (apple-crab/AFH), Chinese Golden Early (throughout Southcentral), Clatt's Keeper (A), Columbia (rootstock/A), Dawn (F), Discovery (F?), Dolgo (crab/A), Early

McIntosh (H), Esther Red (A), Gala (A), Golden Transparent (A), Goodland (F), Greening (AHp), Heyer 12 (AFV), Heyer 20 (F), Hickel Unknown (crab/A), Jersey mac (A), Jonagold (A--ripe for cooking only), Kerr (apple-crab/ADF), Liveland Raspberry (F), Lodi (AF), Lowland Raspberry (F), McLean (F), New York 394 (V), Noret (A), Norhey (A), Northern Spy (H), Novosibirski Sweet (A), Osborn (crab/A), Osman (crab/AF), Prunefolia (rootstock/A), Ranetka (rootstock/AFV), Red Duchess (A), Red Siberian (crab/V), Red Splendor (rootstock/A), Red Sumbo (F), Rhoda Mantet (A), Sweet Sixteen (V), Sylvia (crab/V), Tetofsky (A), Trailman (apple-crab/?), Waxen (H), Wealthy (F--ripe for cooking only), Wein (crab/rootstock/AV), Wellington (H), Whitney (crab/A), Winter Banana (H), Yellow Jay (V), Yellow Transparent (throughout Southcentral), Yorkshire Greening (A).

APRICOTS

(2 varieties)

Manchu (Hp), Manchurian (AV).

CHERRIES

(15 varieties)

Amour Chokecherry (rootstock/?), Baird Bing (A), Baird Unknown (A), Birdcherry (V), GM-61 (rootstock/A), Hansen Bush Cherry (AF), Hanshew Unknown (A), Homer Sweet (Ho), Mesabi (A), Meteor (AV),

Montmorency (A), Nanking (A), Northstar (A), Pin (A), Salmo (A).

CHERRY PLUMS

(5 varieties)

Manor (F), Opata (F), Red Diamond (A), Sapa (F), Sapalta (A).

HAWTHORNS

(2 varieties)

Columbia (A), Fleshy (F).

PEARS

(3 varieties)

Parker (F), Patten (A), Summercrisp (A).

PLUMS

(4 varieties)

Manchurian (rootstock/V), Opal (V), Sepa (A--cooking only), Stanley (H).

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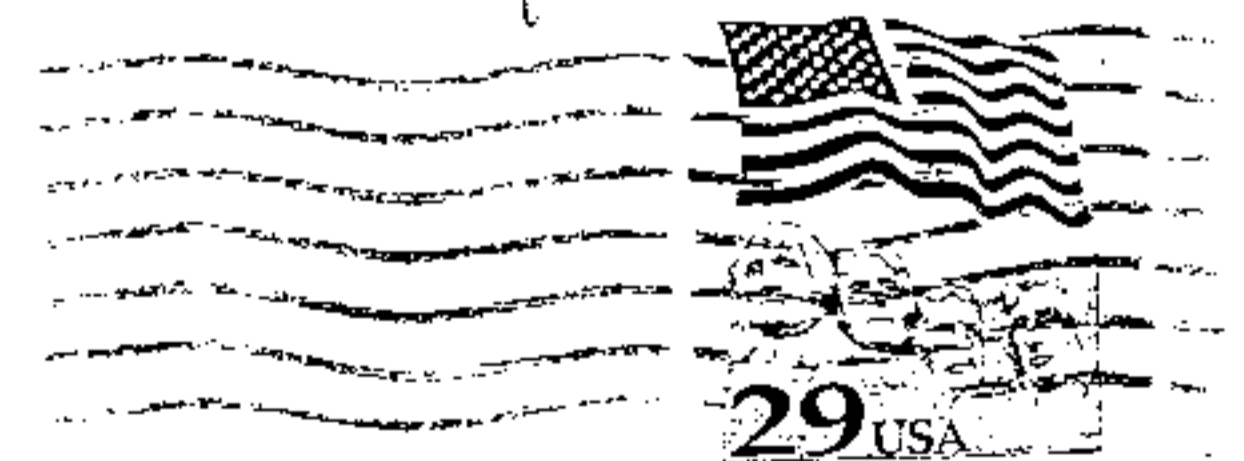
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Legend:

A: Anchorage Ho: Homer
D: Delta Junction Hp: Hope
F: Fairbanks V: Mat-Su Valley
H: Haines

[Editor's notes continued] Were you at the apple tasting in September? Did you jot down some apple musings (quite nice, I might add) on the back of one of your papers and not get home with it? I have your paper and would be happy to return it to you if you'll let me know where to send it. I'll wait to hear from you.

As you can see, I have also included the latest list of edible tree fruits now *producing* in Alaska. Please take a moment to check it over. If you have any producing varieties not included on the list, if you're producing in an area not included on the list, or if you have any questions or comments regarding the list, please contact me (344-9749) or Erik Simpson (243-3058) at once. We want to publish this information and make it available to the general public--not to mention those folks purchasing stock for our local nurseries--so let's make certain it's accurate when it goes out. Your assistance is invaluable. Thank you.



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