

# ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS' NEWSLETTER

Summer 1994

Volume 9, Number 2

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## MEETING SCHEDULE

**September 22, 1994— Annual apple tasting. Note: this is the fourth Thursday rather than the third Thursday in September.** The tasting will be held at Bradley's orchard in Peters Creek, 7-9:30 PM. If you are coming from Anchorage, take the Glen Highway to the first Peters Creek exit (one exit past North Birchwood exit), and turn left at the end of the ramp. If you are coming from the Matanuska Valley, take the South Peters Creek exit and turn right at the end of the ramp. Whichever way you came, you will now be on Voyles Blvd. Follow it 0.7 mile to its end at a "T" intersection at the bottom of a fairly steep hill. The driveway, with a gate through a chain link fence, is directly across the intersection. Bring your best apples, cider, pies, and/or sauce. **This is our best opportunity for publicity, so feel free to bring interested non-members.**

**October 20, 1994—Regular monthly meeting, 7 PM at Dimond Greenhouses. Topic to be arranged.**

**November 17, 1994—Regular monthly meeting, 7 PM at Dimond Greenhouses. Topic to be arranged.**

## ALASKA-GROWN FRUIT AT STATE FAIR IN PALMER

A number of Alaska-grown apple varieties were exhibited at the Alaska State Fair in Palmer this year. Jay Dearborn won "Grand Champion" for his very red Genva Early apples. Dave Crusey won a "First Premium" for some beautiful Goodland apples. Other varieties included Chinese Golden Early, Norland, Rescue, Yellow Transparent, Parkland, Harralred, Trail (crab), Dolgo (crab), Quality (crab), and several others labelled "Apple, Small". It wasn't clear whether the apples were judged on

appearance only, or taste. There seems to be a enormous amount of interest in apple growing out there. As I was taking notes at the apple display, three different people who thought I looked official took the opportunity to quiz me about what varieties they should plant.

## SPRING ORCHARD REPORT FROM CLAIR LAMMERS

Last May (or early June?), Clair Lammers sent a listing of nearly 400 varieties being tested in his favorable location on the road to Chena Hot Springs just outside Fairbanks. The coldest temperature last winter was -30°F, on Nov. 19 and again on Feb. 14. Snow cover was 18-20 inches. I count 41 pear varieties, 28 apricots, 46 plums, about 6 cherries, and about 269 apples on the list. There is an enormous amount of information in the full list so for this Newsletter I'll confine myself to the pears and apricots.

The following pears were blooming as of this report: #1197, #1260, #379, Andrew, Fororstovsky, John, Jubilee, La Cock 6, Mishurn, Orel 15, Rousselett Stuttgart IX, and Ure. The following pears sustained no significant winter damage: #1139, #927, David, Golden Spice, Hanson Siberian, Ilinka, La Jre, Latvian A, Lesnain Krasavitza, Olia, Parker, Shipova, Simon, Patten, Pingo Li, Pioneer 3, PRS "Z", Summercrisp, Tait-Dropmore, and Trubchanmka popularnaia. The following pear trees were dead: #1198, #931 (sunscald), BF6 (sunscald), Bi Li Hsiang (sunscald), Helmer, Rousselett Stuttgart IIV (sunscald), Rousselett Stuttgart II (sunscald), Rousselett Stuttgart IX (sunscald), and Ping Li (sunscald). Obviously, sunscald was the leading cause of death.

Apricot varieties didn't do as well. Only Manchurian and Moongold were blooming. The following escaped winter damage: Mandshurica, Scout, Stratmore, and Prairie Gold. The following suffered slight dieback: Goldcot,

two other Manchurians, Stratmore 1, Stratmore 2, Sub-Zero, and some young apricot seedlings. The rest died: Alfred, AR-10-SX, Bismark 2, Caldwell, Chinese, Drews 1, Hargrand, J.L. Budd, Kelly, NJ-A 62, Oralzhev Krassnyi, Perfection, Sungold, Sunrise, and Sunset.

### FALL ORCHARD REPORT FROM DAVE CRUSEY

For our May meeting, Dave and Carolyn Crusey kindly gave a tour of their one-acre orchard in Knik. The Cruseys live in a very favorable spot that gets more sun and less wind than Anchorage, Eagle River, or Peters Creek, which are just a few miles away across Knik Arm. The soil is a rich, windblown silt. The orchard is surrounded by moose-proof fencing that looks at least eight feet tall.

I called Dave on September 7 to see how his orchard produced this year. It's been an excellent apple-growing summer. The Cruseys' showcase trees are Norland, which have been in the ground for about eight years and produce hundreds of beautiful apples annually. They also are getting good production this year from Chinese Golden Early, Yellow Transparent, Westland, Parkland, Goodland, Rescue, and Carroll. Many branches are weighed down to the ground with apples. Dave reports that his Westlands, which are up to 3 inches in diameter, are great eating this year, although they weren't much good last year. So, this variety has something going for it besides size, appearance, and hardiness. Parkland and Goodland trees that have only been in the ground for two years are already bearing a hundred or more apples each!

Other apple varieties that have not done so well include Duch ess (trees tend to die after a few years), Lodi, Mantet, Summerred, and Harralred (iffy). Beacon produces big, good-looking apples on a hardy, vigorous tree, but the fruit itself is worthless.

The Cruseys also have three producing cherry varieties: Northstar (which tends to go bushy), Meteor (pretty reliable), and Montmorency (no dieback last winter, which was moderate). Two cherries — Kristan and Mesabi — died at age two. Other trees include some small crabs, Ure pear, Manchurian walnut, sugar maple, burr oak (thriving!), and hawthorn.

### HIGH-BUSH AND LOW-BUSH BLUEBERRIES IN ALASKA

After seven years in Alaska, I've yet to eat a native blueberry that compares with either the common lowbush blueberry of Maine (*Vaccinium augustifolium*), or cultivars of the highbush blueberry. I am therefore interested in hearing from any club members about their experiences with blueberry growing in Alaska.

Although most of the popular highbush cultivars are only hardy to Zone 5, some of the new highbush-lowbush crosses are worth trying, at least in the Anchorage area. Five of the nine varieties offered by St. Lawrence Nurseries are apparently hardy enough to be worth a try here. These are Northblue, Northcountry, St. Cloud, Northsky, and Putte. (The Corn Hill Nursery catalog, New Brunswick, Canada, rates the first three as hardy to Zone 3, and Putte has survived -40°F., according to the St. Lawrence catalog). Another factor is height: low-growing varieties will be completely buried during a normal snow year, thereby protected from the extreme cold. When I was back in New Hampshire this August, I learned from one grower that some of his bushes died as a result of a severe ice storm followed by a couple of months of sub-freezing weather. Bushes that were completely encased in ice for that whole time suffered badly.

The lowbush blueberry, *V. augustifolium*, thrives throughout northern New England and Maritime Canada, and would appear to be fully hardy in Zone 3 (and probably Zone 2). The University of Maine Cooperative Extension has put together an excellent guide to growing lowbush blueberries. It is a collection of perhaps two dozen pamphlets and fact sheets in a loose-leaf binder. Topics include planting methods, mulches, burning versus mowing, weed control, and insects and diseases. It can be obtained for \$5.00 from Prof. Dave Yarborough, Rm. 414 Deering Hall, Univ. of Maine, Orono, ME 04469 (Phone 207-581-2923; E-Mail Davey@umce.umext.maine.edu).





## ALASKAN APPLE CENSUS

Several members have talked to me about taking a census of apple trees being grown in Alaska. Such a census would help those who are trying to evaluate varieties in different parts of the state, to locate scionwood of hard-to-find varieties, to get to know other growers at various stages of experience, and perhaps even to find sources of ripe fruit. Assuming I get enough responses by Oct. 15, I'll summarize the results and publish them in the Fall 94 newsletter, which will come out in November.

A blank form is provided on the previous pages; you can xerox the form if you are fortunate enough to have more trees than will fit. I'd welcome your response in any format — handwritten, typed, computer printout, or diskette (preferred). I'll be compiling the census in Microsoft Excel v. 4 for the Macintosh, but I should be able to read just about any Mac- or DOS-formatted diskette, and most software, including Microsoft Word and WordPerfect.

**Part 1** asks for some general information about your location and growing conditions.

**Part 2** is the main body of the survey, about the apple varieties that you are growing. Columns 1 and 2 are self-explanatory. Column 3 is for the number of trees that you have of a particular variety, rootstock, and age. Column 4 is for the year the tree was planted in the ground, and column 5 is for when it first bore fruit. The year grafted (col. 6) is significant because trees may be planted out as day-old bench grafts, or as 4-year-old nursery giants that have already borne fruit in the pot. With enough data, columns 4, 5, and 6 will tell us a lot about the quickest steps to fruit production. Column 7 is for comments on the fruit: ripening date, storage, appearance, and, of course, **is it any good?** Similarly, column 8 is for comments about the tree itself: hardiness, vigor, growth habits, etc. It would be easy to come up with a dozen more columns but to me the key is to make the survey simple enough that people will take the time to complete it.

**Part 3** is a place to list varieties that failed, whether because of death, severe frost damage, lousy fruit, late ripening, or whatever.