

ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS' NEWSLETTER

Fall 1994

Volume 9, Number 3

President and Editor: **Dwight Bradley**, 22008 Voyles Blvd., Chugiak, AK 99567. Phone 688-1268.

Vice President: **Bob Boyer**, P.O. Box 9-1376, Anchorage, AK 99509. Phone 561-2885

Secretary and Treasurer: **Pam Neiswanger Warner**, 7000 Viburnum Dr., Anchorage, AK 99507. Phone 344-9749.

Board Member at Large: **Eric Simpson**, 162 Creekside Dr., Sequim, WA 98382

DUES NOTICE

Please read the expiration date next to your name on the stick-on address label. If your membership has expired or is about to, please fill out the membership form and send it with your renewal check for \$16 to Pam Neiswanger Warner at the address listed above. If you've already paid in the past few months, ignore the sticker.

DECEMBER MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The December Meeting will be held at 7 PM, Dec. 15 (the third Thursday of the month), at Dimond Greenhouses. Julie Riley of the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service will speak on growing currants and gooseberries, and Lynn Hanson will follow that with a presentation on gooseberry recipes. In addition, Bob Boyer will be getting together our group order for scionwood and rootstocks, so please bring your wish list.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The Newsletter is published quarterly, one issue for each season. As I noted in the Spring '94 Newsletter, your contributions are **needed** to keep the Newsletter lively and interesting. There are lots of suitable subjects, from your own experience, that will be of interest to the other club members:

- fruit production — what varieties ripened and when?
- lists of varieties you have growing
- scionwood wish lists
- winter survival notes, especially of untested varieties or rootstocks
- grafting methods
- moose-proof fencing fences
- soil fertility
- pest management
- bees

- failed experiments
- items of historical interest
- plant breeding experiments

Excerpts from published books, articles, catalogs, etc., may be suitable if permission has been obtained from the publisher and author. Although most of the club's most active members are from South-Central Alaska and the main interest seems to be apples, the club serves the whole state and all fruits and nuts.

RESULTS OF APPLE TASTING AT SEPTEMBER MEETING

— by *Dwight Bradley*

The annual apple tasting was held at Bradley's on September 22. About 30 people attended, perhaps a third of them non-members. We sampled 34 Alaska-grown apple varieties, which were contributed by about half that many different growers. People also brought a variety of excellent apple pies, apple- and raspberry crisp, apple sauce, and cider. Eighteen people actually filled out the rating forms. The apples were rated on a scale of 1 to 10 (best). The winner was **Mantet**, grown by Bob Boyer. Here are the average rankings, in order from best to worst:

- 8 or above: Mantet
- 7-8: Norland (red), Roda Mantet, Parkland, Lodi, Karl Franke Mystery Apple, Golden Transparent
- 6-7: Arvid Miller Mystery Crab, Viking, Ginger Gold, Rescue, 15th St. Mystery Apple, Yellow Transparent, Heyer 20, Beacon, Patterson, Discovery and Red Astrachan (tie), Whitney Crab, Morden 359,
- 5 to 6: Rosthern 15, Hazen, Geneva Early, Adanac, Hugh Harris Mystery Apple, State Fair, Chinese Golden Early, Wealthy, Red Transparent, Summerred, Norland (green)
- 4 to 5: Primate, Westland, Heyer 12

As happened most years, the first apple to be passed around — an enormous Lodi — received more 10's than any other variety. Most of the votes for Lodi, however, ranged from 5 to 7, which I suspect is how the vote would have gone if this particular Lodi had been tasted later on.

It should be remembered that the rankings are based on the taste of a single apple (or in a few cases, two apples), so the results are not necessarily representative. On my own scoresheet, the highest scores were for Mantet and Parkland (both 8). Within a week of the tasting, however, I sampled Alaska-grown Crimson Beauty, Eighth & M Mystery Apple, Rescue, Yellow Jay, Yellow Transparent, and Norland, each of which I would have scored 9 or 10. At the tasting, there were two Norlands, one a highly colored (red) fruit that had grown in full sun, and the other, a nearly entirely green fruit from a shaded branch. The red one rated 2nd overall, while the green one 31st! Next year, we should make more of an effort to sample the most highly colored fruits of a given variety.

Even though the tasting was delayed a week from Sept. 15 to 22, there still were a large number of types that weren't ripe. From my notes, these included Wealthy, Discovery, Red Astrachan (mis-labeled?), Morden 359, Heyer 20, Rosthern 18, and Dudley. On the other hand, Geneva Early or Chinese Golden Early would certainly have scored higher if they'd been picked a few weeks earlier.

FRUIT-RIPENING DATES IN FAIRBANKS — by *Clair Lammers*

I had a very good apple, plum, and cherry plum crop this year. No pears or apricots. I also had some grapes (Valiant) and elderberries for the first time. One of my elderberries set two different crops about a month apart — and they both got ripe. The following is the variety and the pick date:

Variety (apples unless noted)	Date picked
Mesabi Cherry	7/29
Pin Cherry	"
Nanking Cherry	7/30
Elderberry	"
Chinese Golden Early	8/18
Dawn	8/20
Rarkland	8/26
Heyer 12	"
Westland	8/29
Manchurian Yellow Plum	8/31

Norland	"
Dolgo	"
Norda	"
Noret	"
Northland	9/4
Pitson #9 Plum	9/5
Assiniboine Plum	9/6
Sapa C.P.	"
Hiawatha C.P.	9/7
Arbor Dale	"
Centennial	"
Amur Red	"
MacDonald	"
Sunnybrook	"
Trail x Shafer	9/8
Dandy Plum	"
Rosthern 15	"
Red Siberian	"
Edith Smith	"
Valiant Grape	"
Trailman	"
Martha x Dolgo	"
Kandil Kataika	"
September Ruby	9/9
Rosthern 18	9/9
Diebel	9/15
Kerr	"
Opata C.P.	"
Manor C.P.	"

I was most impressed with the size and quality of September Ruby. This was the first year it bore fruit. The tree produced 7 apples all over 4 inches in diameter. Another first time producer that is a definite "keeper" is the Sunnybrook along with the Trail x Shafer (2") that are excellent canned whole. I picked 358 fruit off the Trailman. The other Nor-series apples did not set fruit due to Roundup damage and the 4 new Nor-series (Norlove, Norjus, Norbil, and Norrussett) are only two years old.

Our last freeze was 4/28/94 with a +29. I received a killing frost on Sept. 25 with a temp of +24. Our total rainfall for the years was 7.4 inches.

I will have a limited supply of the Evans Cherry this spring. The cost will be \$25.00 for Members of the Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers and \$35 for non-members.

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

PRESSING CIDER IN PETERS CREEK — by *Dwight Bradley*

Lauren and I made five pressings of cider this Fall in Peters Creek, from Alaska-grown apples. The best cider was made from the leftovers from the Sept. 22 apple tasting. There were at least fifteen varieties, and even though half of them underripe, the result was still superb. Nearly as good was a batch of cider made from two varieties described in the next article: the Eighth and M Mystery apple (~ 80%) and the Koenigar Transparent (~20%). The apples were supplied by James Gorton and Mary Koenigar. About 60 third- and fourth graders "helped" make this batch. The third-best cider was made from Rescue. Alan and Gert Lynn of Palmer graciously gave us about 50 gallons of surplus Rescues, along with at least as many Dolgo crabs, from their twenty-year-old trees. The Rescue cider was excellent when fresh: dark brown, tart, very flavorful, and sweet enough. Its only drawback was that it took on a molasses-like taste after only a day in the refrigerator. The best thing about the Dolgo cider was its appearance — it was the color of blush wine, and clear! It was too tart to drink straight up but made a good base for hot mulled cider (sweetened with brown sugar and spiced with cloves and cinnamon). We also pressed a small batch of Novosibirski Sweet, supplied by Tom Marshall. This is an extraordinarily sweet crab that totally lacks tartness. According to Tom it is already sweet well before it ripens. It not much to look at, being covered with brownish russet and stains that look almost like bruises over a drab green background. The cider was too sweet for the adults who tried it, but our kids guzzled it. A blend of Dolgo and Novosibirsk Sweet would probably be very good.

A few additional notes on cider making and its potential here in Alaska. The press we used appears to be a handmade affair that holds somewhere between 5 and 10 gallons of pomace. From what I've been told, it was originally donated to the Club, back when we were a chapter of NAFEX, by a woman from Southeast Alaska. Jay Dearborn has been keeping the press on his farm in Palmer, and had some repairs made on it. What's lacking is a grinder — you hardly get any juice out of an apple if you press it without first grinding it. In place of a conventional grinder, we ended up pounding a layer of apples to a pulp in the bottom of a 5 gallon pail, using the end of a 3" by 5' log. This got old real fast! Next time we go back to New England, we're going to find an old grinder in Maine and ship it up. We didn't

pay close attention to exactly how many apples were needed to make a gallon of cider, but a 5-gallon pail of apples yielded somewhere between one and two gallons.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ROBERT PURVIS

Bob Purvis, the founder of our organization, recently became president of NAFEX (North American Fruit Explorers), as well as editor of their quarterly journal, *Pomona!* Bob now lives in Selah, Washington, but he maintains an active interest in Alaskan fruit growing. He sent a very interesting response to the apple census which I'll distill and include in the next Newsletter.

THE "EIGHTH & M" MYSTERY APPLE AND THE KOENIGAR TRANSPARENT — by *Dwight Bradley*

In September, the day the Anchorage Daily News ran a story about crab-apples that mentioned our apple tasting, I got an interesting call from Mary Koenigar. The paper had shown a picture of a "Hickel Crab", and she had a few things to say about that. According to Mary, about a dozen apple trees were brought to Anchorage from Siberia around 1920. Two were planted where the Elks lodge is now located, and it was one of these that Wally Hickel later saved, by digging it up with a backhoe and transplanting it to his yard (this was why Mrs. Koenigar took issue with the name "Hickel Crab"). Another tree was located at 3rd and K. Another was planted in the backyard of a house near the corner of 8th and M, which then was on the outskirts of town (civilization ended at the Park Strip).

James Gorton, the owner of the house at 8th and M, was happy to oblige when I asked about looking at the tree and trying some fruit. The tree is about 25' tall and the trunk at ground level is a foot in diameter. I couldn't tell whether this is a seedling or grafted apple. If grafted, there are no obvious changes in bark texture or trunk diameter near ground level. Nor could I see any signs that any of the major framework branches had been grafted on. On October 2, both the tree and ground were covered with apples. The fruit is greenish yellow with red stripes on the sunny side, ribbed (slightly star-shaped in cross section), and most but not all specimens are oblong. The core is abaxile and very open. Even on an unthinned tree, the fruit is medium to occasionally large. The flesh is firm, crisp, sweet yet tart, and flavorful. The skin is slightly astringent but this seems to improve

the overall effect. The quality is uniformly high; I tried maybe 20 apples and all would have rated 8 or 9 by my standards at the Sept. 22 apple tasting. It stores at least 5 weeks in good shape. I'm at a loss regarding the identity of this variety. It doesn't match any of the Russian varieties that I'm familiar with that existed in 1920, such as Lowland Raspberry, Yellow Transparent, Duchess, Tetovski, Lubsk Queen, Alexander, or Antonovka. As I mentioned, it might even be a seedling. Until a better name comes along, I'll call the tree the 8th & M Mystery apple. Whatever its name, it is definitely worth propagating in south-central Alaska. I will have some scionwood available at the grafting workshop next April.

Back in the 1950's, Mary Koenigar used to pick apples from the 8th & M tree. Around 1980, she took some scionwood from it, and Mr. Leiser of Alaska Greenhouses topworked onto three Dolgo trees for her. These three trees are planted in her yard near Lake Otis and Northern Lights. One of them, in the most favorable spot, is now 12-15 feet tall and produces heavy crops every year. In my opinion, however, Mary Koenigar's apples are not the same variety as the 8th & M Mystery apple (I suspect that there was a mixup of scionwood). They are very similar to Yellow Transparent. The fruit is light yellowish green, crisp, tart, and juicy when freshly picked, but it gets bland and mealy within a few days and bruises easily. The only difference between this and "ordinary" Yellow Transparent that I can detect is that some fruits have a "bloodstain" at the blossom end, which covers the skin and stains the flesh a deep pink. I've never seen this on the dozen or so Yellow Transparent trees I've come across before. Evidently, Bob Purvis obtained scionwood from Mary Koenigar and there are now at least as few "Koenigar Transparents" growing around town. I have heard that it supposedly keeps till January but the ones I tried on October 2 were already gone by.

If anyone has anything to add about the 8th & M Mystery apple, the Koenigar Transparent, or the Hickie Crab, please let me know.

RESULTS OF ALAKASAN APPLE-TREE CENSUS, NOV. 1994

— *by Dwight Bradley*

So far, I've received nine responses from Alaskan growers to the apple census in the Fall Newsletter. I thank Dave Crusey, Doris & Jay

Dearborn, Fred & Dawn Deiser, Burt & Cindy Durham, Michael Green, Mel Monsen, Charlene Oakes, and Joe Orsi for their efforts. Another half-dozen growers have mentioned that they would be sending me their surveys, but haven't had a chance yet. Please complete your survey, even if you have to leave out some information such as rootstock or year planted. I'll include a revised summary in another Newsletter.

- The table below lists varieties on a total of 503 trees. In a few cases I've lumped together two or more strains of a given variety. In addition, a few growers have topworked a branch or two of some other varieties (these are not in the table).
- Most of the trees are very young.
 - 1960's — 11 trees
 - 1970's — 0 trees
 - 1980's — 57 trees
 - 1990's — 436 trees
- Although not all surveys are clear on whether certain trees are producing, at least 109 of the 503 trees have fruited. Quite a few trees that were grafted in 1991 produced their first crops in 1994.
- The most popular varieties, based on the number of growers who have at least one, are: Norland and Parkland (8 growers), Yellow Transparent (6), Geneva Early, Beacon, Rescue, Westland (5) Summerred, Vista Bella, Lodi (4).
- The most popular varieties, based on the number of trees in the ground, are Norland (74 trees), Rescue (56), Parkland (32), Chinese Golden Early (31), and Yellow Transparent (29).
- Rootstocks, in order of popularity, include Ranteka (155), Bacatta and Siberian (154), Malus micro malus (40), Antonovka (38), Borowinka (18), and all others (6).
- The oldest trees reported are Rescue, Chinese Golden Early, Canada Red, Jacques, Quality, and Summerred, all planted in 1960 by the Dearborns of Palmer. There are, of course, many older trees in Alaska.
- The Dearborns reported a 1994 apple harvest of 1500 pounds.

1993 ALASKAN APPLE TREE CENSUS

Variety	Trees	Growers		
Acorn	4	1	Morden 359	2 1
Almata	2	2	Morden Ruby	3 1
Avenarius	1	1	New Summer Scarlet	1 1
Beacon	6	5	Norda	1 1
Breaky	1	1	Norland	74 8
Brookland	3	1	Norson Stalet	1 1
Burgundy	1	1	Northern Lights	1 1
Canada Red	3	1	Novosibirski 04A1	1 1
Caroll	4	3	Sweet	
Centennial	2	2	Oriole	8 3
Chestnut	4	1	Parkland	32 8
Chinese Golden Early	31	3	Patten	3 1
Columbia	1	1	Pipkin Katrinka	2 1
Crimson Beauty	2	2	Pop's Dalgo	7 1
Discovery	2	2	Primate	1 1
Duchess	3	2	Quality Crab	12 2
Dudley	1	1	Quinte	2 2
Early Cortland	1	1	Raritan	1 1
Early Harvest	4	2	Red Astrachan	3 2
Early Joe	1	1	Red Duchess	2 2
Early Mac	2	2	Red Ester	3 1
Fall Red	2	1	Red Free	1 1
Fameuse	3	1	Red June	1 1
Fifteenth St	1	1	Red Melba	1 1
Geneva Early	10	5	Rescue	56 5
Ginger Gold	3	1	Roda Mantet	1 1
Golden Sweet	1	1	Rosthern 15	1 1
Golden Transparent	1	1	Rosthern 18	2 1
Goodland	3	2	Severay Sinap	1 1
Haralred	2	1	Sheep Nose	2 1
Hazen	2	1	Starks Lodi	2 1
Heyer 12	3	1	Starks Summer Treat	5 1
Heyer 20	2	2	State Fair	2 2
Iowa Beauty	1	1	Summer Rambo	1 1
Irish Peach	2	2	Summer Scarlet	1 1
Jacques	2	1	Summerred	12 4
John Wallace #6301	1	1	Tetofsky	2 2
Kerr	4	1	Trailman	2 1
Keswick's Codlin	1	1	Vista Bella	4 4
Korichnoye	1	1	Waxem	2 1
Polosayoye			Wealthy	1 1
Liveland Raspberry	2	2	Westland	8 5
Lodi	9	4	Whitney	7 1
Lowland Raspberry	2	2	Williams Pride	1 1
Mantet	3	3	Winter Queen	2 1
Minnesota 1734	1	1	Wynoochie Early	1 1
			Yeager Sweet	1 1
			Yellow Jay	3 2
			Yellow Transparent	29 6

ALASKA PIONEER FRUIT GROWERS'
ASSOCIATION

1995 Membership Application or Renewal

Name: _____ New: ___/Renewal ___

Address: _____

Phone (h): _____ Phone (w): _____

Dues are now \$16.00 per year, payable by March 1, 1995. Please make your check payable to Pam Neiswanger Warner, 7000 Viburnum Drive, Anchorage, AK 99507, or bring your dues with this form to the next meeting.

Please list your primary fruit-growing interests:

Small fruits: _____

Tree Fruits: _____

Would you like to donate an additional amount to support a lending library in:

Anchorage? _____, Fairbanks? _____, or elsewhere? _____

How much? \$ _____

(Please include your donation with your membership check — and thank you for your generosity!!)

Would you like to suggest specific titles for purchase (please include all pertinent data):

Purpose and goals: The Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Association began in 1985 as a chapter of the North American Fruit Explorers (NAFEX). NAFEX 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". Although we are no longer a chapter of NAFEX, our organization retains the same goals, with special emphasis on those relevant to Alaska. Other goals include evaluation of various cultivars and rootstocks for hardiness, instruction of members and the public in fruit-growing techniques and cultural practices, exchange of information, group ordering of materials, promoting communication and friendship between Alaskan fruit enthusiasts, and encouraging and helping friends and neighbors to establish their own fruit trees and bushes. We publish a quarterly newsletter containing articles on fruit growing in Alaska, and we hold monthly meetings from September through May. Meeting times, places, and topics are listed in the newsletter, which is mailed to members upon payment of their dues. We have members scattered from Ketchikan to Fairbanks, Homer to Haines, and into Canada and the Pacific Northwest.