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Hello Fruit Growers!

It's time to Zoom in for our November membership meeting on Thursday, November 12, 2020 at 7:00 pm. Click the link to [Join](#). The passcode is apfga. (click to see entire [invitation](#))

We have lots to do and we need you to participate! We will have a short business meeting to give you the opportunity to vote on board members for the next two years. The meeting will be followed by our annual round-table (or round-computer?) of what we learned this year. It is your 2 minutes to tell the club something that worked well for you this past season. Click the following links for an [agenda](#) and [minutes](#) from our last membership meeting in March.

We also need to gauge your interest in rootstock for the spring, and whether there is sufficient interest to place orders for rootstock for cherry, plum, pear, apricot, etc. So, before you read any further please click, fill out, and send back the [rootstock survey](#).

Winter has definitely arrived. We clocked our first below 0 temperature already in East Anchorage. Luckily, the freezer is packed with fruit, so bring it on! The picture above is from a late August picking of our blueberries (1.5 gal) before going into the freezer. We continued to pick blueberries through mid-October due to an extended fall and light frosts that didn't seem to deter them.

On the apple front, I am always interested to see what apples hold up well in the refrigerator. Carroll was picked early (9/15/20) and stayed crisp for 5 weeks. It still tastes good, but now is relegated to cooking or drying - both of which it excels at. Lee 27 (picked 9/18/20) also stayed crisp for 5 weeks, even though I may have picked it a bit late. In regards to crab apples, Chestnut continues to be quite crisp. Surprisingly, Altiaski Sweet, an apple that I didn't think would keep particularly well still has some crunch. It seems important not to let the apples get over-ripe on the tree if you want to store them.

State Fair (picked 9/29/20), Prairie Magic (picked 9/15/20), and Simonet (picked 9/25/20) continue to be crisp. We are almost out of State Fair, but as a test, we dehydrated some of the smaller apples and they produced an excellent, complex flavor. We are pleased to note that State Fair is another good multi-use apple that holds up well in storage.

I have also been contemplating and learning about cherries, especially sweet cherries. It was encouraging to learn that sweet cherries are actually quite hardy once acclimated for winter. They can withstand temperatures to -20. The growing issues seem to revolve around whether they acclimate appropriately before the temperatures become too cold, whether they maintain dormancy during the occasional winter temperature spikes, and whether they de-acclimate too soon in the spring. At any of these points, flower buds and tissue can be damaged.

In many places in the country, such as Washington or Michigan, they face all three of these threats, anyone of which can ruin or diminish a crop. In South-central Alaska, because of our latitude, we rarely have a severe cold snap once spring arrives and trees finally break dormancy. We do have problems some years in the middle of winter with severe chinook winds that can raise the temperature high and long enough for cherries to break dormancy, and our fall to winter transition can sometimes be very abrupt. However, climate change seems to be lengthening the glide path from fall to winter as we saw this year.

So, the question seems to be this: what varieties of sweet cherries and root stocks most successfully respond to the Alaska seasonal cues to acclimate for the onset of winter, and are slowest to respond to mid-winter temperature spikes? I would be interested to hear of any studies or observations you may have on this issue. In my own yard, I noticed that the Romance cherries I had grafted onto Prunus Maackii dropped their leaves weeks before the Juliet and Romeo dropped leaves on their own rootstock. However, there are no studies that confirm a link between leaf drop and bud acclimation. These two processes may work independently of each other. The interplay between rootstock and plant in regards to acclimation is complex and warrants more study.

Finally, if any of you still need spiral tree guards, club member Bob Daniel reports that he found 36" tree guards (you can cut them down or in half) online at www.groworganic.com. He has a couple extra tree guards from his order that he is willing to sell. If you are interested just click the link to [email Bob](#).

Don't forget to return the rootstock order survey above, and I will look forward to seeing you on Zoom on Thursday.

All the best,

Mark Wolbers
President, APFGA