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Hello Fruit Growers!

Our next membership meeting is Thursday, February 13 at the BP Energy Building. The festivities begin at 6:30 pm with some refreshments and the opportunity to socialize with your fellow fruit growers. Any food or drink that you might wish to contribute to our hospitality table would be much appreciated.

I am happy to announce that Washington State Assistant Professor of Small Fruit Horticulture, Dr. Lisa DeVetter will be our presenter via Zoom video-conferencing. The title of her presentation is "Update from WSU Small Fruit Horticulture - Agricultural Plastics in Raspberries, and Blueberry Cold Hardiness." She will discuss WSU research regarding improving production and fruit quality through new management tools, like agricultural plastic mulches. In addition, she will present an update on their on-going blueberry cold hardiness research. Click the link if you would like to see her [bio](#).

I am grateful for Lisa's willingness to step in at the last moment. We were very sad to learn that our previously scheduled presenter, Chad Finn from the USDA, Agricultural Research Service in Corvallis, was in a serious accident in Hawaii and subsequently died from his injuries. Chad was fun to talk to and was a very successful small fruit developer that included blackberries, strawberries, and blueberries. Over his career he had released or co-released 51 berry cultivars! I was looking forward to having him visit Alaska on behalf of APFGA knowing everyone would learn a lot and enjoy meeting him.

At the beginning of January, my wife and I caught the cute bunny pictured above. We found him in the front yard making a meal out of our low hanging forsythia branches. When he later found his way into the back yard where all the fruit trees and bushes are, that's when we decided it was time to take him to animal control. It was a domesticated rabbit that either was abandoned, or a pet who escaped. He was a "warry wabbit" as Elmer Fudd would say, but his kryptonite was a few home-dried apple slices leading into the cage. I know that probably would have worked on me too! I have my own trap for unwelcome animals, but if you need a live trap, Anchorage Animal Control has traps that you can borrow.

Ilona Farr, at our last meeting, showed us some double cherry stoners that she highly recommended. She subsequently took a count of who wanted one and placed an order. To those of you who ordered them, they have arrived and the cost is \$50.00 each. Please bring cash or check to give to her at the meeting.

I had mentioned at the end of her excellent presentation on processing fruit that I have had great success dehydrating apples, cherries, mushrooms, or just about anything else with my oven. Should you be in the market for a new stove, look for a model that has "convection oven" capability. If it has a convection oven fan, then chances are good that it has a dehydrating option. This function runs the oven at a low temperature along with the convection oven fan to dehydrate foods. I can run 3 baking sheets of fruit at a time.



My recommended *modus operandi* for dehydrating cherries is to pit them, freeze them, and then thaw and let them drain in a colander for 4 hours. The juice can be used for wine, jelly or drink. I spread the drained cherries on parchment paper in a single layer and pop them into the oven. Using the dehydrate option, they are completely dry in 12 hours. If you want them softer, simply shorten the time.

Our three Evans cherries produced over 100 pounds of cherries last summer. The freezer was full, and drying was a great option for storing the extra cherries while producing juice that we drank and used for wine making. Every quart of frozen Evans cherries will release about 18 oz of juice, and 20 lbs of fresh cherries dried will reduce to fit into one quart-size ziplock bag!

If you haven't already done so, please go to our web page (www.apfga.org) and renew your membership. If you don't renew, the notice to the March membership meeting will be the last that you will get from us and that would be sad. If you hate these pesky reminders to renew each year, consider signing up for a lifetime membership! Just go to the [web-page](#), click "Join" and scroll down to the membership category that you want and click to put it into the cart. Then checkout, and *voila*, it is done.

It is with sadness that we received news that former APFGA President Pat Mulligan has passed away. A celebration of life is planned for April 4, at 4:00 pm at the Finger Lakes Elks Lodge, 2600 Barry's Resort Drive, Wasilla.

Please also put the following dates on your calendars:

1. Thursday, March 12, 2020 at 7:00pm: Membership Meeting at the BP Energy Building: David Landis and Director of the OSU Extension Service Anita Azarenko; owners of [LaMancha](#), a Tilth Certified (organic) Orchard.
2. Saturday, March 28 at 1:00 pm: Pruning Workshop, Boyer's Greenhouse.
3. Saturday, April 18 at 1:00 pm: Grafting Workshop, ASD Begich Middle School Multi-Purpose room.

Finally, please find links for the [minutes](#) of the January 27, 2020 special board meeting and [directions](#) to the BP Energy Center. I look forward seeing you at our meeting on February 13 with Dr. DeVetter and to hearing the questions you may have for her!

Best wishes,

Mark Wolbers
President, APFGA