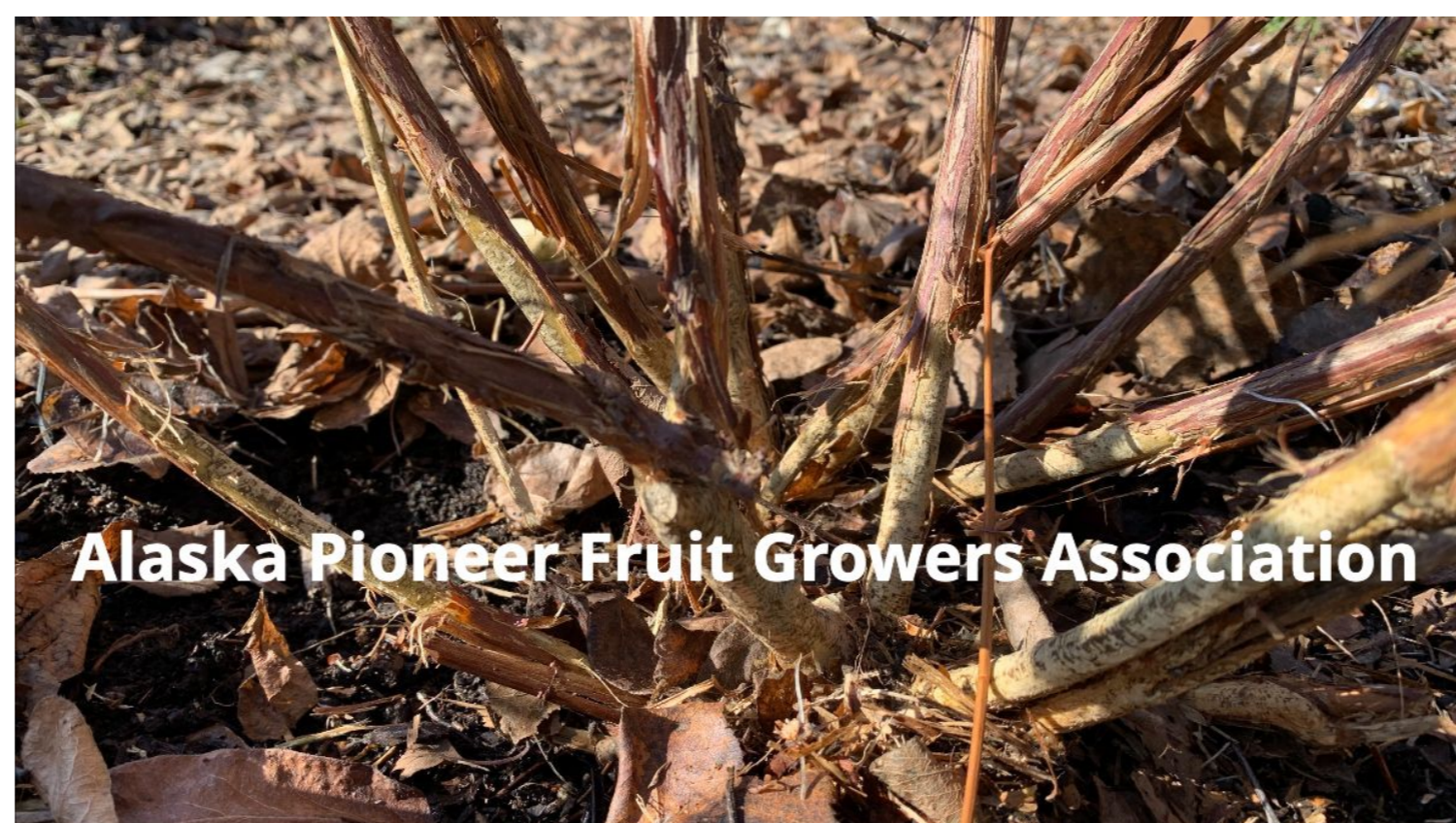


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Hello Fruit Growers!

A couple weeks of record warmth really melted the snow quickly! The cranes arrived back in our neighborhood last Saturday, and Monday we saw a black bear in our neighborhood Russian Jack Springs Park, so spring is officially here.

With the vanishing snow came awareness of the damage inflicted by voles over the winter. Hopefully, you are taking stock as your plants emerge. I had mentioned in my last newsletter that silicone can provide some protection for very recent vole damage, provided it hasn't girdled the plant. Dan Elliot recommended white silicone, as it provides protection from sunlight while the plant works on re-tasking cells to make bark and cambium.

In our yard, the voles ate a variety of plants that had never been touched during the past decade we have lived here. The most serious damage was to the raspberries where they chewed virtually every cane destined to fruit this year. They did not discriminate between yellow, red, or purple. Other first-time damage included two lingonberries that were partially mowed down, and bark gnawed off an Alaskan juniper, Rhododendron, and an Aurora Haskap (photo above). None of the other six haskap varieties were chewed on, so one might assume that the Aurora was somehow more appealing. Anyway, be warned if you grow this variety.

The unusual and prolonged record warmth has been bringing the trees out of dormancy. You have probably noticed the bud swell beginning, especially on the cherries & plums and the early varieties of apples. Soil temperatures have begun moving upward and on Sunday, the temperature at 6" depth exceeded the 12" temperature in our orchard for the first time since October 3, 2020.

This early warmth is not always in our best interest as we have historically had temperatures below freezing up to the beginning of June. If the flower buds develop and open early and are struck by temperatures below freezing, there can be severe damage to our crops. If you wish to learn more about the potential damage from low temperatures, I am going to share two links. The first is from Michigan State University and is titled [Assessing Frost and Freeze Damage to Flower Buds of Fruit Trees](#), and the second is from Washington State University and is titled, [How to Assess Cold Damage](#).

This is the time of year when folks are looking for plants. Member Tim Pritchett (907-529-4681) emailed me to tell me of the many varieties of strawberries and raspberries he will have for sale. I encouraged him, and encourage any member selling plants to list what they have on our [website](#). If you click on the "Members" tab and then log in, you can scroll down and click on "Forums." Here you will see a section called "Classifieds." This is the place to advertise plants for sale, and to see what other members have to sell. If you have problems logging in, contact our membership coordinator, Mark Findlay.

Remember that anything you plant, should be inoculated with endo and ectomycorrhizal fungi to aid root growth and water/nutrient uptake of your plants. This year, I am using a blend of mycorrhizae called Wildroot Organic Mighty Mycorrhizae Water Soluble Concentrate. I bought mine on Amazon, but most nurseries carry similar products. I suggest you buy only the amount of inoculant powder that you think you will use this year. I am not sure what the shelf-life is, but I go with the motto that fresh is better.

My first use of the Mycorrhizae Concentrate will be when I plant strawberries in a couple weeks. I just simply mix up a gallon or two in a 5-gallon pail and put the plants in to soak a bit before I plant them. It is easy, and a good process to include if you are potting or planting rootstock or any new nursery or garden plants.

The University of Minnesota has been telling their farmers that it is [time to remove winter straw mulch](#) from their strawberries. They advocate that this be done once the soil gets to 40 degrees. If you mulch your strawberries, then you should begin to uncover them. If they flower before June, you should be prepared to protect them from frost.

If you haven't cleaned up your raspberry beds, that should be one of your first tasks. Cut out the canes that fruited last year and thin out some of the remaining canes for good air circulation. If you prune the tops of this year's fruiting canes, it will stimulate larger laterals and increase your fruit production. There are a myriad of ways to grow raspberries. You might read up on growing raspberries by consulting the Oregon State University guide [Growing Raspberries in Your Home Garden](#). <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/ec1306/html>

Our friend and board member Gary Masog woke up from sedation on Saturday and continues to recover in the hospital. This was welcomed news. The club was very generous with members donating a little over \$1,000 this past week to Gary and his family to help out with expenses. Gary's wife and son wanted to pass along their gratitude for your generosity and support.

There will be a board meeting on May 13 at 7:00 pm. Click the link to [join by zoom](#), or see the full invitation [here](#). What follows are links for the [minutes](#) from the April 1 board meeting, and the [proposed agenda](#) for May 13.

All the best,

Mark Wolbers
President, APFGA