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Hello Fruit Growers!

One warm week really advanced our fruit phenology. Since the end of April, we have only been accumulating 50 GDDs/42°F each week, which meant the plants were developing slowly. The week of May 15 - 22 however, had double that amount of weekly heat unit accumulation leading to a season total of 300 GDDs/42° last Sunday. This caught us up to where we were last year at this time and maybe a bit ahead due to the warm soil conditions. Apples, cherries, saskatoons, currants and gooseberries have begun to flower, while haskaps have been at full bloom for the past week. Above is a photo of Prairie Magic in our orchard.

Below are the Growing Degree Day (GDD) totals by week in East Anchorage:

April 17	23 GDDs/42°
April 24	45 GDDs/42°
May 1	96 GDDs/42°
May 8	146 GDDs/42°
May 15	194 GDDs/42°
May 22	300 GDDs/42°

To learn more about growing degree days and the temperature logger used, please see my March presentation "[From Bud to Fruit](#)". If you purchase and install a HOBO temperature logger with a solar shield please [email me](#) and let me know. Remember to place the logger in a temperature neutral spot in your growing area. Even small yards have micro-climates. Install the logger where it is neither a warm or cool spot but in a place that represents the average climate of your property.

The forecast for the next week is for slightly warmer than average temperatures with average rainfall for this time of year. This means it will be dry. Fire danger is high and you should be thinking about watering your trees and bushes. However, do not apply over-head water to your trees while they are in bloom! Water on the blossoms can destroy the viable pollen. So, if you feel you need to water during bloom, water underneath the canopy. Generally, 1 -2" of water per week applied over two sessions is sufficient. You can increase your water efficiency with the use of mulch or woodchips as a ground cover in your orchard area.

June is the month to apply fertilizer around your trees if needed. To assess this, look at the amount of growth from last year. Start at the end of the branch and follow it down until you see the growth ring from the previous year. If your bearing tree put on 8 or more inches of new growth last year, or your young non-bearing tree put on 12 or more inches of new growth, you probably don't need to do anything. If your tree is not growing like it should, the easiest solution is to spread a bag of composted steer manure under the tree and out past the drip line a couple feet. (Remember to keep mulch and compost away from the trunk of the tree.) Any compost or fertilizer with nitrogen is applied early in June so that the nutrients are absorbed and processed by the end of the summer. We don't want to promote tender new growth at the end of the summer as the tree needs to be getting ready for winter.

The follow-up to this is to do a soil test in the beginning of August. This will let you know if you have an underlying nutritional problem. You may be lacking a basic nutrient. Or, it could be as simple as adjusting your soil pH. Our naturally acidic soil (pH 5.0-5.5) can impede the efficient uptake of nutrients by fruit trees. In any case, you can offer your trees more informed care by sending out a soil sample for testing.



We get all excited this time of year about our fruit trees, (like the Evans cherry in the photo above!) but we shouldn't forget about our berry crops. Remember to spray haskaps, saskatoons and any other plants that are attractive to leaf-rollers with Bt once they are done flowering. In another month, sawfly larva will be looking to defoliate your currants and gooseberries. Now is the time to make sure you have Spinosad on hand to deal with them. For a good review on growing and caring for raspberries, check out Oregon State University's [Growing Raspberries in Your Home Garden](#).

With our trees headed into full bloom, the next two weekends will each feature orchard blossom events. This Saturday, May 28, APFGA will hold an orchard tour in the valley. The tour, organized by Board Director Ilona Farr, will begin at 10:00 am at Ilona's orchard at [3700 S. Bodenbug Loop](#) in Butte. At 11:00 am we will begin the drive to Fred and Dawn Deiser's orchard at [371 S. Old Meridian Circle](#) in Wasilla. We will leave the Deiser's at 12:15 pm to finish our tour with a visit to Dennis Hook's orchard at [1540 E. Hook Drive](#), also in Wasilla. We should finish the tour around 1:30 pm. It has been a while since we have had orchard tours, so please review the [APFGA Tour Guidelines](#).

Next week Saturday, June 4, Boyer's Orchard & Greenhouse ([645 East 81st Ave. Anchorage](#)) will be having a [Blossom Festival](#). The festivities start at 3:00 pm with apple trees for sale (locally grown, overwintered, Alaska-hardy varieties), self-guided tour, blossom Bath experience, chair massages and rock painting. Then from 6:00 – 8:00 pm, there will be live music with Jim Kerr & Denise Martin, an introduction to the orchard's mission and how you can help, along with Food & Drinks. A \$10 per person donation is suggested to support this non-profit community education orchard.

One last item. I am taking notes about cherry/apricot damage last winter. If you had damage or winter die-back on new grafts or established trees please [email me](#).

I look forward to seeing you at the upcoming events!

All the best,

Mark Wolbers
President, APFGA