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Hello Fruit Growers!

It was nice to have a few days of rain in South-Central Alaska. With temperatures in the 40's and low 50's, it was interesting how everything just paused. But now the sun is back and the plants are booming again. The "Prairie Magic" (picture) is particularly striking this year.

It seems like just about everything is in bloom, finishing blooming, or just beginning to bloom. In my last email I wrote about the bloom compression we were witnessing this year. Bob Purvis, an APFGA founding member who now lives outside, sent me an interesting email elaborating on bloom times and commercial fruit production. He said I could share it, so just click the link if you would like to read [Bob's email](#).

I know that I have often disparaged wasps due to their propensity to eat our ripe cherries and raspberries. Some years, they can be a bit of a pest. But, in their defense, I was noticing how active they are in our gooseberries and currants. They appear to be the main insect visiting the flowers on those plants.

The honeyberries and haskaps have almost finished flowering. When the flowers are done and the bees are no longer visiting the plants, that is the time to spray for leaf rollers. Leaf rollers make their home in the honeyberries and will cause damage to the fruit and young shoots. The easiest course of action, especially if you have a number of bushes, is to spray them with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) using a hose-end sprayer. Bt is a naturally occurring soil bacteria that makes proteins that are toxic to some insects but not mammals. The insects ingest the bacterium and the proteins interrupt their ability to feed and they die.

Bt is most effective when used in the year that you purchased it. It can be stored in a cool, dark place, but Bt degrades and is less effective in the second and third year. After the third year you should buy new. So, if you spray and nothing happens, it may be that your Bt is old. (Yes, I learned this the usual way!) Now, when I purchase Bt, I take a permanent marker and write the year on the container. Bt is effective on leaf rollers, but when the time comes to deal with saw-fly larva on your currants, you will want to reach for the Spinosad.

I was surprised at the number of folks that took me up on my offer of Watermelon berry plants. We dug up and potted a bunch more, so if you want more, or just didn't get around to picking one up, just [email me](#). They are prolific, and I keep finding more popping up!

I also have a number of one and two-year old potted cherry plants that sprouted from seed in the orchard. My *modus operandi* is to go into the orchard and sample the cherries and spit the seeds as I walk around. The seeds are from Evans and Carmine Jewel, with some Romeo and Juliet in the gene pool as well. In any case, they survived last winter in pots and are ready for a home. If anyone has some space and the desire to experiment just [email me](#). They are free, and who knows, you might discover a decent cherry in the mix.

As always, feel free to share this email with an interested friend or family member with an invitation to join APFGA. Simply direct them to the [website](#) and they can join our merry band of fruit enthusiasts!

All the best,

Mark Wolbers
President, APFGA

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