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Hello Fruit Growers!

The fruit trees are beginning to flower. Our first apples to bloom were the Prairie Magic (above) and Altiaski Sweet in the background. Every year it is fascinating how our plants respond to whatever winter they are dealt. This year our Whitney crab apple is very slow to leaf out. It looks a bit funny, since the grafts of Chestnut, and Zestar are not waiting around. It may be that Whitney is a bit marginal in regards to hardiness, or it could simply be taking a year off. Last year's sweet cherry and apricot grafts all took their time leafing out as well.

Last weekend I finished top-working grafts on the apples and cherries. This spring I decided to purchase a small wood chipper. We had been saving all of the cuttings from pruning and top-working the fruit trees. The picture below is of the surprising rainbow of colors from the wood chips. The dark red chips are from Royalty crab. I had decided to purchase a Speedforce Woodchipper. It can handle up to 2-inch branches. I wanted to be able to recycle our cuttings back to the orchard and also wanted the ability to make fresh wood chips to start mycelium mats to experiment with growing mushrooms in the orchard and garden. In all, I was very pleased with the machine.



The haskaps (honeyberries) are about done flowering so it is time to spray Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) for the leaf rollers. As I mentioned last year, be sure your Bt is not more than three years old, otherwise you will be wondering why there was no effect. I recommend writing the purchase date on any biological products. If you have Saskatoons, spray those as well since leaf rollers seem to like them. My wife took some cherry cuttings to put in a vase to flower inside. We soon saw caterpillar poop under the branches and discovered the green friends below. So, Bt for the cherries too! Remember to spray when the pollinators are not on the plants.



Last year, I made the observation that yellow jackets were visiting our gooseberries and currants. After our session in the spring on native pollinators, I was being more observant about who was visiting what flowers. It does seem that the primary visitors to our gooseberries and black currant are yellow jackets and bald face hornets (photo below). I'm not a fan of the yellow jackets since they can be a pest when fruit is ripening. I have been trying to limit their numbers, but traps have been ineffective. It appears that the advice to bait with protein early in the season is not accurate since the queens are obviously feeding on nectar.



Yael Hickok informed me that she met with Rob Boyer, the Boyer's son and inheritor, about the future of the Boyer greenhouse and orchard. She presented him with the general idea of the city purchasing the land to use as a park, headquarters for youth employment, as well as a community garden and food forest. She explained that the city is working on getting the funding set up, but that it may take as much as a year or two before it's all said and done. She asked if he would be willing to let her fundraise for the cost of the utilities with the hope that he would allow her to continue to care for the property until the city is ready to make an offer. Rob was very appreciative of the help towards the utilities. Yael has set up a GoFundMe page if you would like to [contribute](#) to help keep the orchard running.

Anchorage's newest community food forest and community garden at Chanshtnu Muldoon Park is having some work days and looking for volunteers. They have many shrubs to plant and other related tasks. The work parties are outdoor, family friendly, covid safe activities (masks optional). Tools will be provided, but you might want to bring your own gardening gloves. The dates are Saturday June 5 and Sunday June 6 from 10AM-2PM, and Tuesday June 8 and Thursday June 10 from 6PM-8PM. Parking is available at the new parking lot (Boston and Debarr: take Muldoon to E 12th Court, turn right on Boston). [Email Kristi Wood](#) for details or phone/text her at (907)278-2453.

Good news this week is that our friend Gary Masog is making progress with his recovery. With some luck, he may be discharged from Providence St. Elias to continue his recovery at home by the end of the month.

And finally, a reminder about the upcoming blossom tour at the Brown Hen Farm in Chugiak on Sunday, June 6, 2021 at 2:00 pm. We are looking forward to visiting with our hosts, Barbara Henjum and Jeff Brownlee, and seeing their orchard in full bloom. Click the link for [directions](#).

All the best,

Mark Wolbers  
President, APFGA

