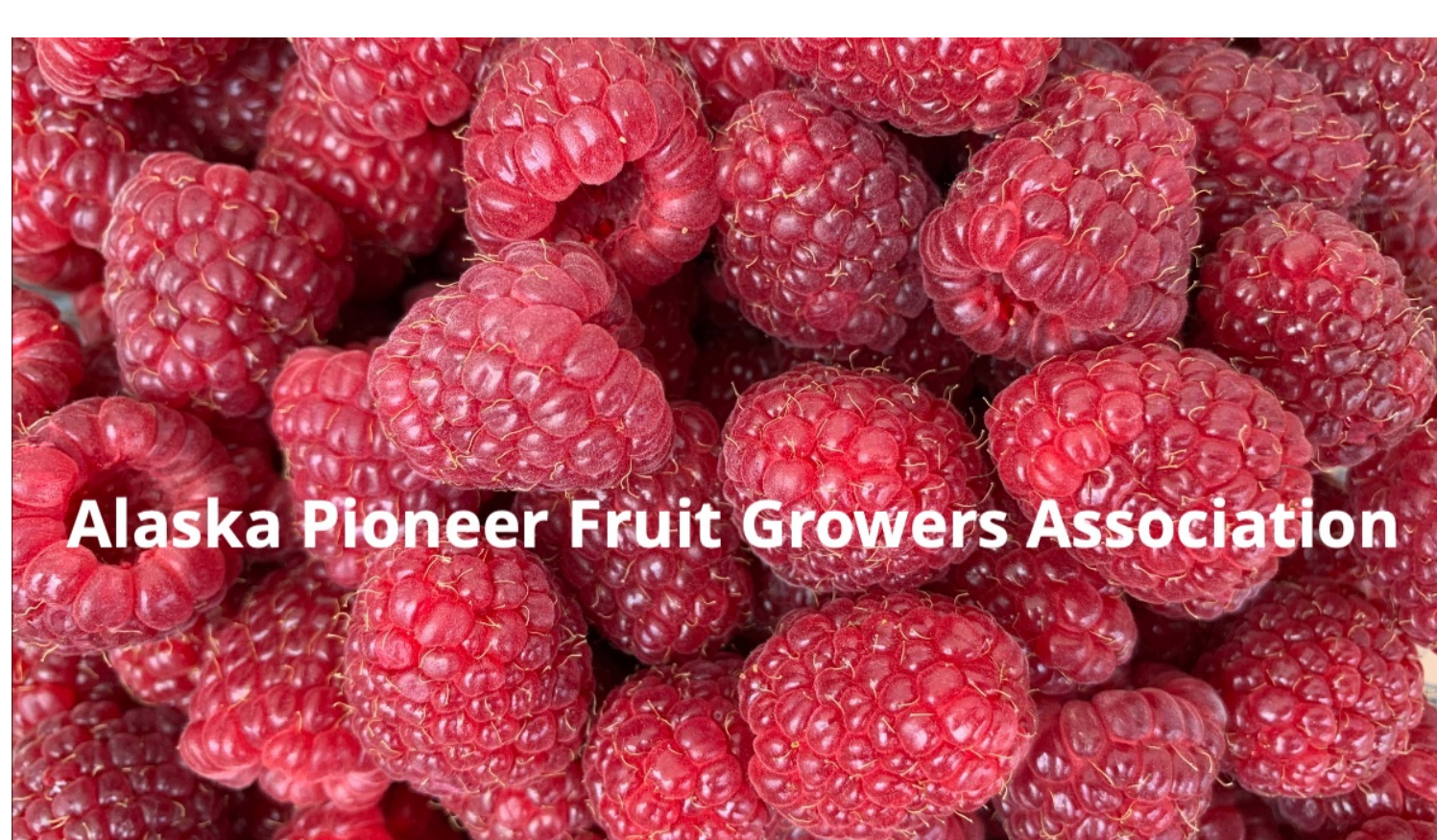


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Hello Fruit Growers!

In Southcentral Alaska, we have gone from a record setting warm and dry May and June, to one of the wettest months of July on record. In East Anchorage, over 4" of rain fell over a period of one week from July 14-21. Wet weather persisted through Monday evening with an additional 1.5" rain accompanied by 24 hours of 15-30 mph winds. Even with the raspberries tied to wires, they look a bit bedraggled after being pummeled by the breezes. Any damaged fruit was picked and put in the freezer for juice.

This summer's weather is indicative of the emerging reality of climate change. Weather systems now stagnate in one place for longer periods of time creating weather extremes, and these erratic weather patterns make it increasingly difficult for plants to respond appropriately.

Plant breeders are trying to develop varieties that can compensate. Most recently I was reading an article on tests for broccoli and other vegetable varieties that would perform better in extreme heat. In fruit, breeders are developing varieties that bloom later in an attempt to avoid late spring freezes like those that happened in Washington through North Dakota earlier this year. Closer to home, in addition to our recent weather, we personally witnessed a fall last year where daytime highs unusually stayed in the upper 30's and lower 40's until the first big snow in November. This was immediately followed by extreme cold of -10° to -15° degrees. Without consistent days with temperatures below 32°, plants didn't have the opportunity to build increased hardiness past their base hardiness to handle the extreme cold when it arrived.

Thus, the loss of somewhat marginal plants such as our 3 year-old Jerseycot apricot, (rootstock survived) and the loss of the 4 year-old apple variety William's Pride that died back down to the snow line. In addition, dieback was observed on Danube tart, and Clark sweet cherry. New sweet cherry grafts (Black Gold, Kristen, White Gold) didn't stand a chance.

The take away is that even in Alaska, climate change will hurt our fruit growing efforts more than it might help us and we should all be supporting efforts to decarbonize. The gases causing global warming will take decades to dissipate. Even if we were able to reach zero emissions today, the gases will continue to warm the planet and disrupt our weather patterns for decades to come. The problems become exponentially worse and more expensive the longer we delay taking action. Already this year, it is estimated that events related to climate change have caused nine billion dollars of damage in just the United States.

With the recent cooler, wetter weather, growth slowed. But as of Sunday, we still maintained a 10 day lead over last year. The Growing Degree Day (GDD) totals and soil temperature data for July 3 and 10 at our orchard in East Anchorage were as follows:

7.17.22 1540 GDD/42° 912 GDD/50° Soil 61.2°F/6" 60.5°F/12"  
7.24.22 1658 GDD/42° 975 GDD/50° Soil 59.5°F/6" 58.8°F/12"

La Niña continues, but long-term weather forecasts look good and call for normal temperatures, and somewhat drier than normal precipitation for the remainder of the growing season.

With the early onset of wet conditions in Southcentral Alaska, it is probably appropriate to talk about harvesting and rain. While June bearing strawberries are wrapping up, raspberries (Killarney in photo above) are ripening, as are early-to-mid varieties of haskaps, gooseberries and currants. With small fruits, mold is a particular concern with prolonged wet weather. Thus, the stress on management practices that facilitate good air circulation.

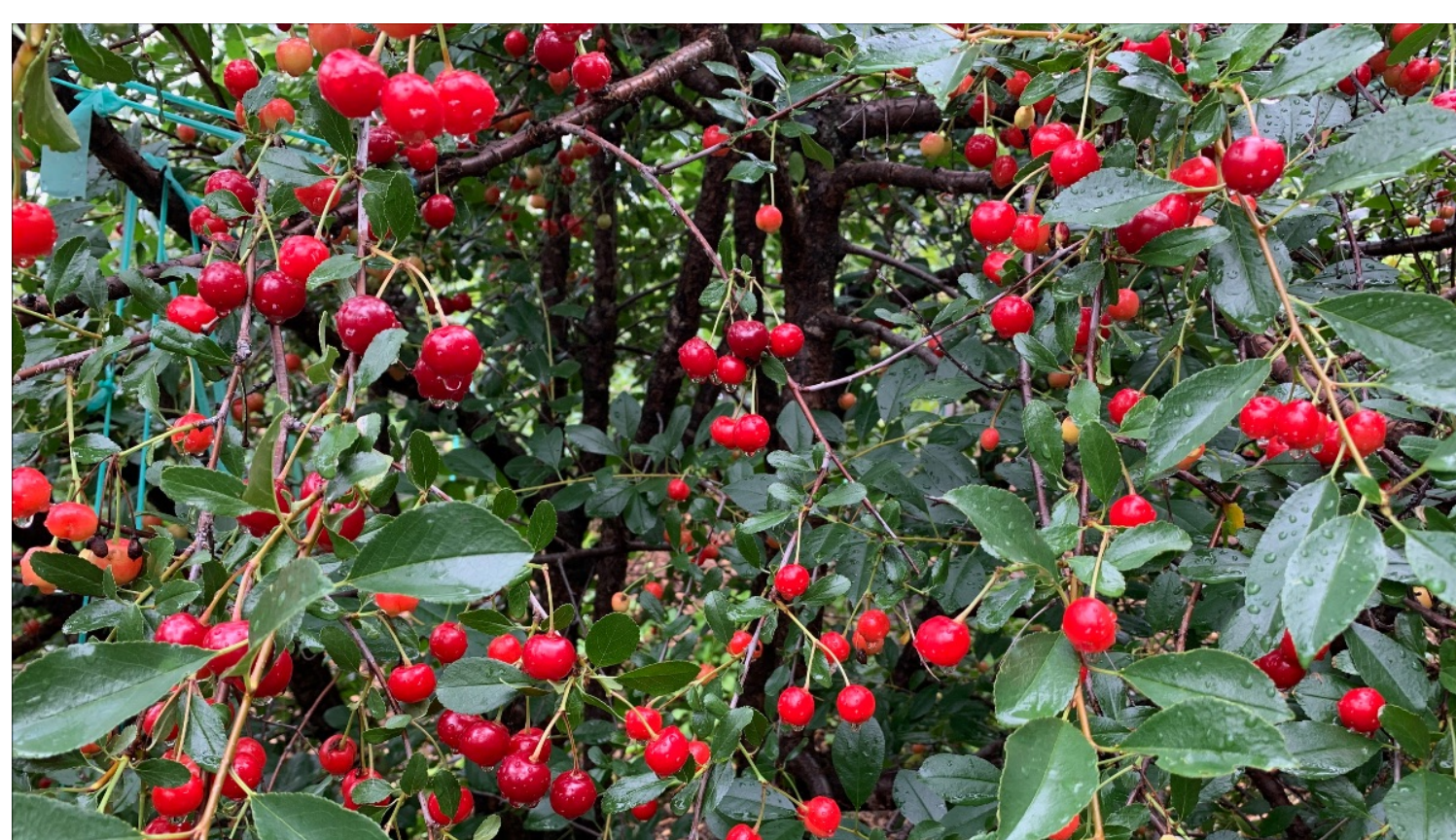
With Haskaps, pruning is key to opening the bushes so that they can dry during breaks in the rain. With raspberries, if you grow on wire or in raised beds, eliminating the first-year canes that you will not be keeping to fruit next year can improve air circulation. With all small fruits, it is important to keep the ripe fruit picked. If I find a berry that I missed that has become moldy, I carefully try to drop or remove the moldy fruit without spreading the mold spores.

Strawberries do not like to be consistently cold and wet. Hoops covered with plastic open at the ends is the best way to preserve berry quality when the weather turns wet while fruit is on the plants. I do admit however, that it feels a bit funny to need to water my covered strawberries after the heavy rains!

With June-bearing strawberries coming to a close, it is time to talk about renovating. June-bearers will produce better and be invigorated if you renovate your patch once they are done bearing fruit. Renovation first involves removing the current leaves 2 inches above the crowns which can be done by hand or with a mower that is set high enough. The cuttings should be removed or blown from the patch since one purpose of renovation is to remove any moldy, diseased or insect infested old leaves. If you are growing strawberries in a matted row system, then you should also narrow your rows.

Next fertilizer is applied to strengthen the crown in preparation for next season. Dr. Lisa DeVetter from WSU recommends .4 - .6 oz of Nitrogen (N) per 10' of row. You can use whatever source of fertilizer you wish. To calculate the amount of N in a fertilizer, use the number analysis on the fertilizer container. The three numbers represent the percentage of Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), and Potassium (K) in the fertilizer. If I were using a 16-16-16 granulated fertilizer, the first number indicates the percentage of N. So, the target amount of .4 oz ÷ .16 (16%) = 2.5 oz of fertilizer. Since my plants are planted in plastic (hill system), I will use a liquid fertilizer by diluting one cup fish emulsion in 2 gal of water. Fish Emulsion is 5-1-1, indicating that it is 5% N by weight. So, 8 oz (1 cup) x .05 (5%) = .4 oz. Once fertilizer is applied, keep the plants well irrigated and any subsequent runners clipped.

For more on growing strawberries, please see the excellent publication by OSU, [Growing Strawberries in Your Home Garden](#). Although, there are some recommendations concerning cultivars or other geographic specific information that may not be appropriate to Alaska, it is a thorough and thoughtful guide.



With the onset of rains, those of you growing Carmine Jewel (photo above) should be prepared to deal with cracked cherries once they start turning dark. Carmine Jewel was one of the first of what would be called the Romance Series of cherries developed by the University of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan has a growing season that starts wet and finishes dry, while Alaska is the opposite. Although it is a very flavorful pie cherry, it has a propensity to crack when water sits on the cherries. This invites insects and mold unless you cull the cracked cherries on a regular basis. Consequently, many in Alaska pick the cherry before it can achieve its full sugar potential. Carmine Jewel is suitable for high tunnels, but for outdoor growing in Southcentral, Romeo, Juliet or Evans are much more crack resistant and achieve higher brix levels.

The beginning of August is an ideal time to submit samples for soil and/or tissue tests. There are many labs to choose from. I have personally used [Brookside](#) and [Midwest Labs](#) and have been satisfied with their work. Be sure to read what the company requires in regards to sampling, and if needed, pay for an interpretation and recommendations based on the test results. If you are sending multiple soil samples, Midwest Labs has a prepaid FedEx label that is a good bargain. If you would like to learn more about tissue tests, please see the article [Why You Need a Tissue, a Leaf Tissue Analysis](#) by Erika DeBrouwer (OMAFRA). For more information on taking soil samples, please see the OSU publication, [A Guide to Collecting Soil Samples for Farms and Gardens](#).

In other news, for those of you who dream of growing nuts in Alaska, Upper Midwest Hazelnuts is hosting a [Hazelnut Week](#).

If you know someone, or you are looking for a property in anchorage with an established orchard, member Karen Leis has passed along the following listing for [3810 Lynn Drive, Anchorage, AK, 99508](#).

And finally, please remember to email me your rootstock request for next spring. Just click the link for the [2023 Rootstock Order](#).

All the best,

Mark Wolbers  
President, APFGA