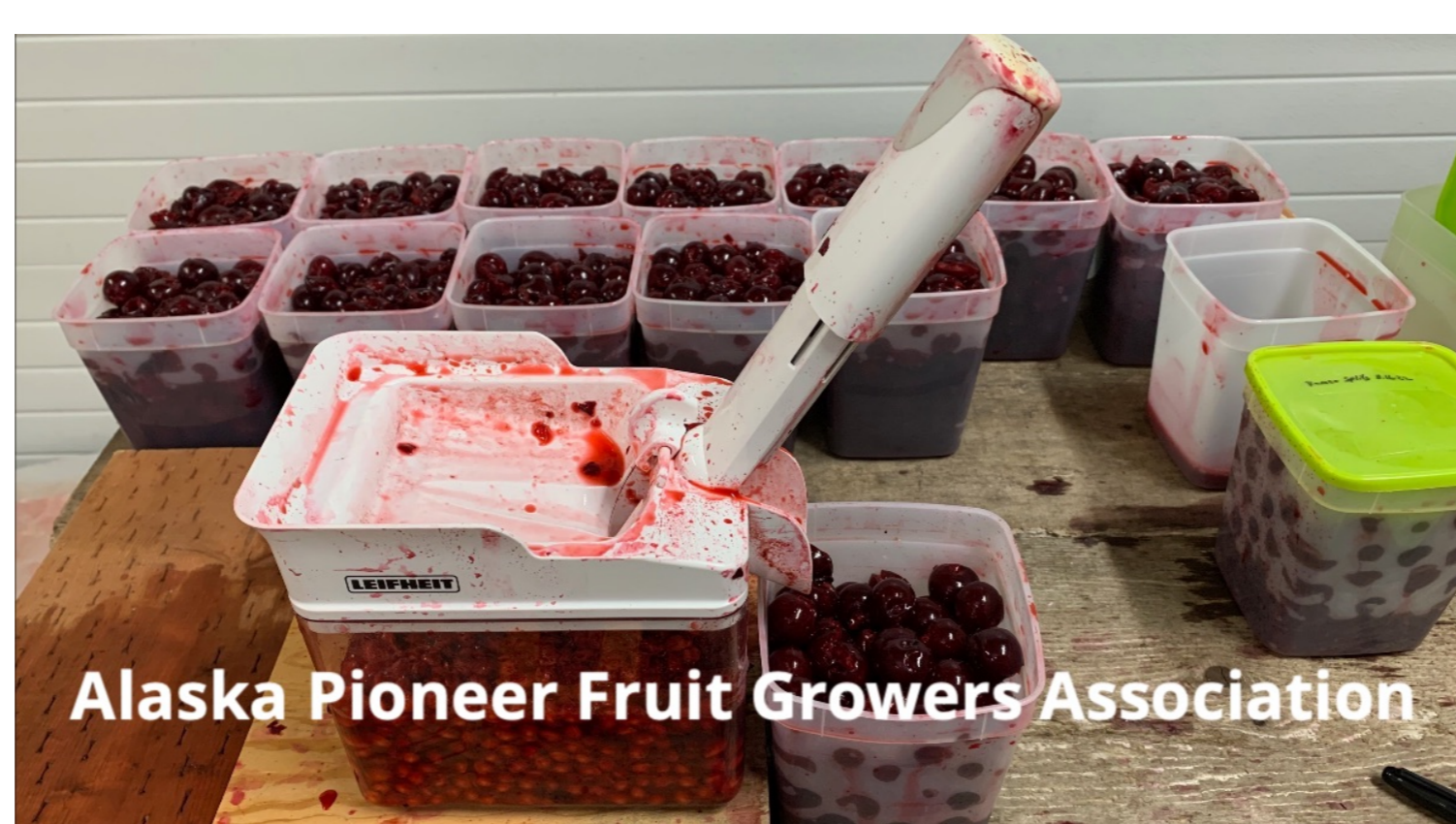


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Hello Fruit Growers!

Wet doesn't begin to describe the weather in Southcentral Alaska. The rain has been seemingly nonstop for the past three weeks, with over 5" so far this month. Wave after wave of rain has been spinning out from lows moving from the Bering Sea to the Gulf of Alaska. There has hardly been a break long enough to mow the yard, let alone pick fruit. The breaks are so short that nothing dries out.

This has been particularly challenging for raspberries and cherries. I harvested and processed the Carmine Jewel cherries last week Tuesday when it wasn't raining quite so hard (picture above). I had already culled split cherries four times off the bush. With no change in the weather in sight, I decided it would be best to pull the cherries rather than to lose more of them to splits and mold. Although the average brix was lower than last year (only 10.75), it was the right decision. This is not a crack resistant cherry to begin with and with water constantly sitting on the cherries for weeks . . . well, the outcome was not going to be optimal.

On Thursday, during the hour-long and only break in the rain that day, I harvested one bush of Romeo. Although, much more crack resistant, even this variety was suffering a higher number of splits than usual. Size was good with Cherries up to 28 mm, but like the Carmine Jewel, the average brix was one point lower than last year, reading only 13. (Brix is a measure of the sugar in the fruit and can be observed with an inexpensive [refractometer](#))

With the constant rain, Growing Degree Day (GDD) accumulations have slowed. Only 90 GDD/42° were accumulated this past week. Sun doesn't push through the cloud layer and consequently there is little warming. Even our greenhouse seems only marginally warmer than the outdoors. Our GDD totals and soil temperatures at our East Anchorage orchard were as follows:

8.14.22 2060 GDD/42° 1212 GDD/50° Soil 60.1° F/6" 59.2° F/12"
8.21.22 2150 GDD/42° 1250 GDD/50° Soil 57.5° F/6" 57.1° F/12"

Raspberries and haskaps are finishing, blueberries are being picked, currants and gooseberries are ripe, and early apples are on.



With the picking of early apples like Parkland, Norland, Yellow Transparent, and Golden Uralian (photo above), it must be time to start pressing apples! We will have two member-only apple pressings hosted by Barbara Henjum and Jeff Brownlee at their Brown Hen Farm in Peters Creek ([directions](#)). The first pressing for early apples will be on Sunday, August 28. The second pressing for late apples will be on Sunday, September 25.

To facilitate grinding the apples, your fruit needs to be in 4 or 5-gallon buckets. If you bring your apples in a cardboard box or other container, you will be asked to transfer them into an empty bucket. Each 5-gallon bucket of apples will yield a gallon and a half of juice. Bring only clean apples and enough containers for your juice.

Discard any apples with signs of contamination from birds and animals or contact with manure. You cannot fully wash off pathogenic bacteria like Salmonella, as it will adhere to the surface of the fruit. Apples from the ground should be rinsed and washed with a sanitizer. If using household chlorine, use only plain, unscented household bleach without added thickeners or fragrances. You can make a sanitizer solution by putting 3 tablespoons of bleach into 5 gallons of water.

Limit is 3 press loads (9 buckets) of apples per person each day. If you want the pressed apple residue (pomice), bring a heavy bag or suitable container. If you want a particular mix of apples for your juice, place them in your buckets accordingly.

Apples can be picked when ripe and held, if necessary, until the pressing. The cooler the storage, the better. Apples that have gone soft but not rotten are fine for pressing. For those that want to press Yellow Transparent, I recommend that you mix those apples with a firmer variety so that they grind and press better.

Fresh apple juice freezes well if you want to have juice for drinking later in the year. Each pressing is by appointment only. Click the link to [schedule a time](#) for the August 28 early apple pressing. Submit your request by midnight Thursday. Just estimate how many buckets you will want to press if you still need to pick.

In other news, there was an excellent article about floral bud initiation published in ONfruit titled, "[Bountiful Buds for the Next Season.](#)" Berries Unlimited has released its latest haskap/honeyberry variety. You can read about it in the article "[New Honeyberry/haskap Superfruit Announced: Honey Champion.](#)"

Ariel Cannon, the President of Meadow Lakes Community Development, a partner non-profit to the Meadow Lakes Community Council, is preparing to begin the development of a community orchard at the Meadow Lakes Sport Fields and Park site. Anyone who would like to be involved, should call him at 907.440.8282, or send him an [e-mail](#). Also, Board Director Ilona Farr has kindly provided [information and a recipe](#) that folks had requested after tasting some goodies on our last orchard tour.

We will have two apple/fruit tastings coming up. The tastings are free and open to the public. Please invite your friends to come discover their favorite apple varieties and please plan to bring samples of your fruit to be part of the tasting.

The first tasting is Sunday, September 11, at Anchorage Begich Middle School at 1:00-2:30 pm. PLEASE NOTE THE TIME as I published this incorrectly in the last newsletter.

The second tasting is Saturday, October 1, at Mid-Valley Greenhouse, Wasilla at 2:00-3:30 pm.

Finally, please remember to send me your [rootstock request for Spring 2023](#).

All the best,

Mark Wolbers
President, APFGA