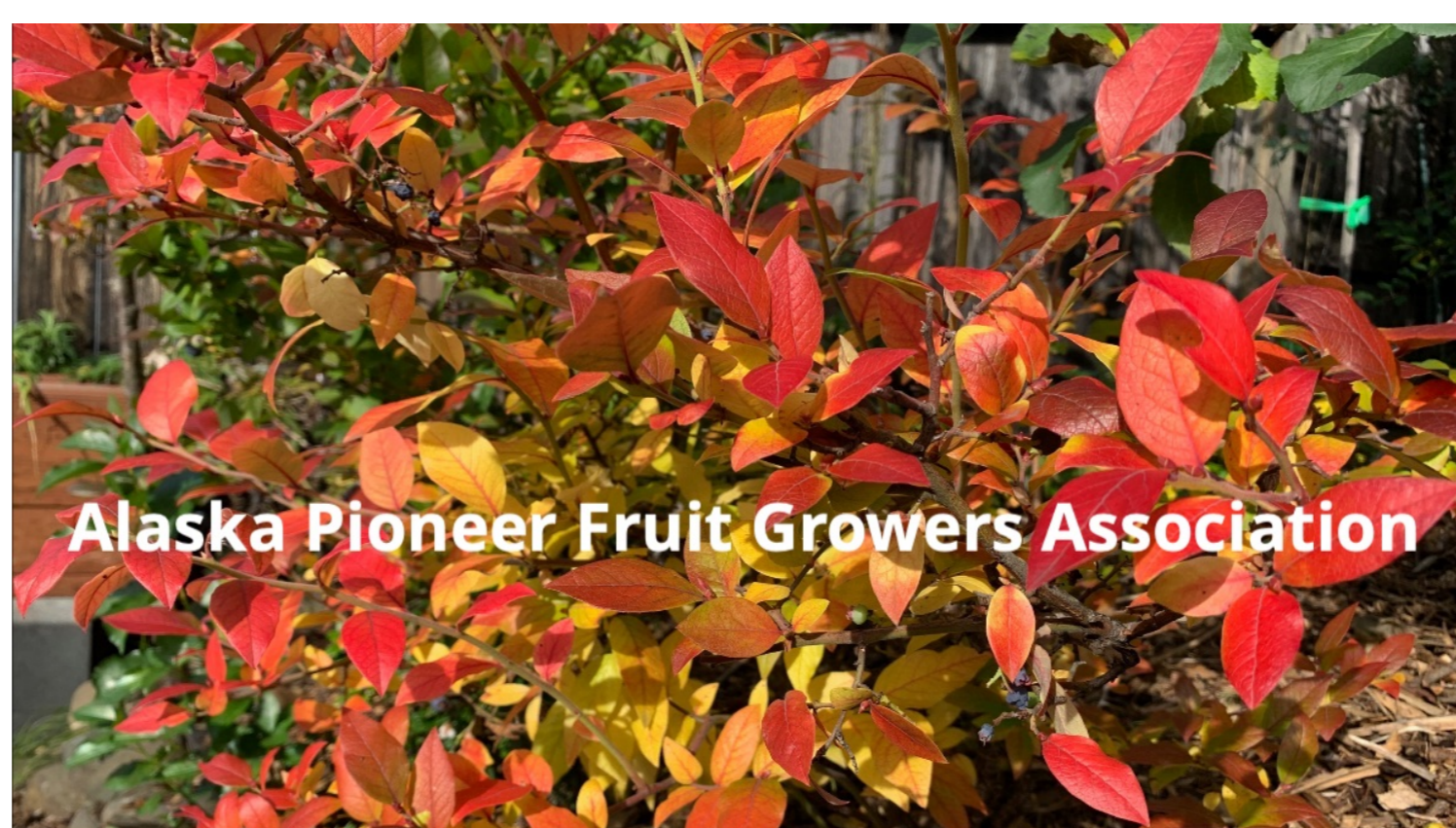


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Hello Fruit Growers!

Well, the blueberry bush photo above says it all. The season is coming to an end. We held our late apple pressing event last Sunday. We pressed over 3000 pounds of apples! Many thanks to Barb Henjum and Jeff Brownlee for hosting us at their Brown Hen Farm, and to all of the volunteers that helped to make it a successful and fun day for our members.

Our final event of the growing season is the Late Apple/Fruit Tasting this Saturday, October 1, hosted by Mark Oathout at [Mid-Valley Greenhouse](#) in Wasilla from 2:00 - 3:30 pm. The event is free and open to the public, so invite friends and family to explore the wonderful variety of apples and fruits grown locally. It is a great opportunity to discover what varieties you may want to grow in your orchard!

You are highly encouraged to bring samples of your apples and any other fruits that you are growing to the tasting. Those bringing fruit should arrive between 1:30 and 2:00 pm to set your fruit out. We have created a [Tasting Information Card](#) to be placed by your fruit. Please print the sheet and fill out one card for each variety that you are bringing. You can do this on the computer, or by hand, or on the spot when you arrive. If you are bringing multiple varieties, I recommend that you fill out the cards and place them in the bag with each variety you are bringing. There will be numbered paper plates for your fruit and Tasting Information Card. If bringing apples, please bring 2-3 large apples, 4-5 medium apples, or 6-9 small crabs. Please note on the card if the fruit was grown in a greenhouse or high tunnel by checking the “Indoors” box.

A few Knives will be provided, but it goes faster if you bring your own jack knife or paring knife. To sample an apple, you are requested to make thin wedges/slices from pole to pole of the apples. You will be provided a rating sheet to rate each apple and make notes. When you have finished tasting, your sheet will be recorded and given to you to take home. We will have pens, but your experience will be better if you bring your own pen and a clipboard.

Thank you to Mark Findlay for tabulating the results from the [Early Apple/Fruit tasting](#). You can click the link or find them under the “Research” tab on the APFGA website. The results from Saturday’s tasting will eventually be posted there as well.

One advantage of the constant storm track into South Central Alaska is that the clouds and rain have held off any hard freezes. This has allowed some later varieties to stay on the trees, but with daily highs often just in the 50’s, fruit development has slowed. In growing degree days, we are only accumulating 50 GDD/42° within a one-week period. To put it another way, at this rate it would take 10 weeks to achieve the fruit development that occurred in the month of August, or 13 weeks to accomplish the fruit development that happened in July.

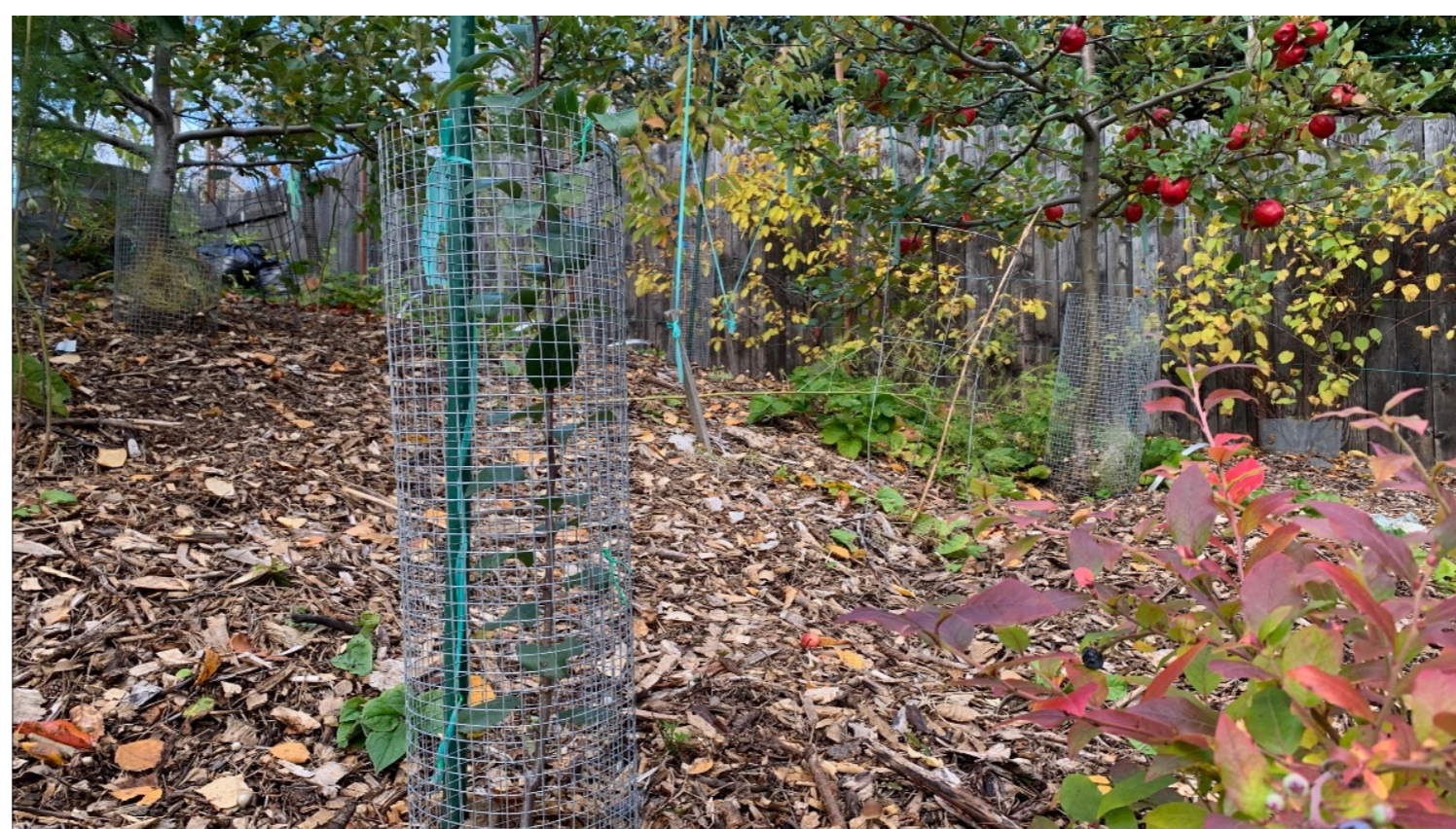
Our GDD totals and soil temperatures at our East Anchorage orchard as of Sunday were:

9.25.22 2600 GDD/42° 1438 GDD/50° Soil 52° F/6” 52.5° F/12”

The excessive rainfall this season made for one of the wettest summers on record in the Anchorage area. I wonder if the copious water is responsible for the change in apple texture for some varieties. For example, State Fair is just about ripe, but the texture is softer this year. It will be interesting at the tasting to see if any other varieties exhibit similar outcomes from this growing season. Perhaps the crisper texture of Zestar (a State Fair relative) when grown in high tunnels is the result of less water in the second half of the season rather than just higher temperatures?

In reference to recommendations concerning apples and freezing temperatures in the last newsletter, Dan Moore at Fire Apple Orchard in Big Lake sent me the following observations: “Regarding the freezing, we have winter apples (Lobo, Red Baron, Honeycrisp, and maybe Pomme Pech and Antonovka 1.5) that require frosts or they will not ripen. As an example, I have picked Honeycrisp just before a frost and they brixed at around 8-9%. Took them into the house and they never moved forward. Then I allowed the tree to get frosted (25-32 degrees) several times, picked them and checked them over time and the Brix climbed to %13. They also stored until the first of May. They looked pretty rough but tasted good. Last year went below freezing for three days with the low being 24 degrees. I thought the apples left on the trees were toast but they were not. Most were Goodland with the rest being Lobo, Red Baron, Honeycrisp and Hazen and they all came through it fine.”

With winter looming, it is appropriate to remind everyone to have rodent screening or tree wraps in place before freeze-up. I use ½” wire cloth and put a 2 ft high cylinder around each tree. Push the bottom an inch or two into the soil and voles won’t be able to find your tree when burrowing under the snow. The photo below is an example showing the screening around a recently planted pear whip (Summercrisp/Pyrus Ussuriensis) that I grafted in May. For young trees, it can be good insurance to tie them to a stake during winter to prevent snow-load from bending them over or breaking the leader. Hopefully, our first snow doesn’t come until the leaves are off the trees. But, if the first snow comes before that, or is a wet/heavy snow, then be prepared to knock the snow off of your trees to prevent limb breakage.



We will have an APFGA Board of Directors meeting on Thursday, October 14 at 7:00 pm on Zoom. Members are welcome to attend by clicking the [Zoom link](#) at the appointed time. Here are the links to the [proposed agenda](#), previous [meeting minutes](#), and the full [Zoom invitation](#) if needed.

One of the agenda items is to prepare for the November 10 annual membership meeting. Each November, 3 or 4 of the seven board of director seats are up for renewal or replacement. Because our 320 members are located from Fairbanks to Homer and beyond, we will hold the meeting on Zoom. If you are interested in serving on the board, please [email me](#) no later than October 14, so that I can set up a poll for the membership to vote on in November. Nominations during the November meeting will not be accepted.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the tasting event on Saturday. Until then, I wish you and your remaining apples sunny days and cloudy nights!

All the best,

Mark Wolbers
President, APFGA