



**Happy New Year Fruit Growers!**

**I wanted to remind everyone of our upcoming membership meeting on Thursday, January 9 at the BP Energy Building. The festivities begin at 6:30 pm with some refreshments and the opportunity to socialize with your fellow fruit growers. Any food or drink that you might wish to contribute to our hospitality table would be much appreciated.**

**As usual, at 7:00 pm we will have a short board meeting before launching (or maybe I should say lunching!) into our program. Board member Ilona Farr will be presenting on "Preserving Techniques and Recipes for Our Harvest." Her presentation will be loaded with tips and techniques for preserving the fruit you grow. She will discuss the pros and cons of processing your harvest, including resources and equipment.**

**More importantly, she wants your involvement in a recipe exchange! If you have a favorite recipe for using your fruit, bring a printed copy that we can post on the web-page or that people can**

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take a photo of. Of course, bringing a recipe is good. But if you can also bring a sample of the final product for people to taste, now that would be fantastic! We will be setting up a table at 6:30, if you are bringing a recipe and possibly a sample for others to try.

On New Year's Eve day, the temperature was close to 50 degrees and much of the previous snow had melted. So, I took advantage of this to check the bait stations I had put out to control the mouse and vole population. As you can see from the photo above of one of my mice posing by a blueberry bush, they were out of control. Last year they had got over the top of a couple of my tree screens and killed a valuable apple tree and damaged some others. I thought I had successfully culled the little critters this fall, but to my surprise a number of my bait stations were empty! I was telling my wife about this, when I got an email from Dan Moore from Fire Apple Orchard in Big Lake. He also has witnessed a proliferation of voles this year, and they were cleaning out his bait traps as well!

During the night of New Year's Eve, we received a good dump of snow. The next day, after clearing our driveway, I went around every fruit tree and uncovered and pulled away the snow from the screens at the base of our trees. Voles are not good climbers, so as long as they don't have a way to get over the top of your tree wrap or screen, your trees stand a better chance of being protected. The voles also like to burrow along the grass under the snow to find food (your trees). You can impede that behavior by packing down the snow around your plants and making sure your screens are imbedded into the soil a couple inches before freeze-up.

It is a testament to how desirable our fruit trees are, that so many animals want to eat them! Moose love them, rabbits will eat what they can reach on top of the snow, and mice/voles love to eat the bark and even roots if they can access them. In any case, be warned that more than one of your fellow fruit growers has seen a surge in the vole populations this past year. Check your trees and make sure the snow is not above your screens.

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In other news, the long-awaited club apple “Cosmic Crisp” has appeared at local retailers (click link for more on [club apples](#)). The apple is very dense/hard, an extraordinary keeper and is resistant to oxidation. The flavor is similar to “Braeburn” but with a little tart tang. I have not tried cooking with it yet, but in general, for me, it failed to live up to the hype and publicity. It did however remind me that this was exactly why I joined the club! I wanted to grow more interesting and tasty apples than what are produced by large commercial growers. The last of my Prairie Magic, Lee 27, and Simonet apples were eaten in early December. I miss them already!

Speaking of joining the club, January is the time to renew your membership in APFGA. To make that easier, and to forego the formidable challenge of deciphering your handwriting, board members Mark Findlay and Ben Teitge have been working with our web master Erik Johnson to make it possible for you to renew your membership online with a credit card. (Awesome!) Simply go to our website ([apfga.org](http://apfga.org)) and click “Join”. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and select "renew membership" to add it to the cart. You will see the cart icon at the top. Simply click on that and scroll down to complete your membership form and payment.

I hope to see you at the membership meeting January 9. Click on the following links for the [Agenda](#), the December 12 meeting [minutes](#), December 30 special board meeting [minutes](#), and directions to the [BP Energy Center](#).

Best Wishes for the New Year,

Mark Wolbers  
President, APFGA

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