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Happy New Year Fruit Growers!

We have a nice blanket of snow on the ground thanks to a record December snowfall. The total precipitation for 2022 has been one of the highest on record for Anchorage. Climate scientists say to expect more of this in the future. A warming planet enables the atmosphere to hold more water. When it rains or snows, it can now really rain or snow!

On the good side, 40" of snow provides good insulation. On the not so good side, 40" of snow tops the two-foot vole screening around our trees, and covers the lower scaffold of branches (photo above of our trees). If that wasn't enough, Southcentral received some rain in places that put a nice crust on the top. If you have young trees, you may want to gently remove the crust and snow that is covering the lower branches before the snow compresses. When melting and compaction eventually does occur, the snow can pull downward on small, young branches and break them.

As for your vole screening, I suggest you put on some snowshoes and break a trail out to your trees to compress the snow around your trees and pull away any snow topping your screens. I like to use a garden hoe in an up and down motion to compress the snow down to the ground around the screen. This inhibits the voles, who move between the snow/soil interface from reaching your screen. Then I use the hoe to pull away any excess snow that would provide voles easy access over the top of the screens. The little buggers are good climbers, but these simple actions can increase your odds of preventing the voles from girdling your trees.

In Alaska we have animals that love to feed on our trees at every level. Protecting your trees may include electric fencing for bears, 8-foot fencing for moose, exclusion fencing for rabbits, and hardware cloth for voles. One electric fencing system that I have read about for deer and moose was called [3D Fencing](#). Electric fencing involves less metal and consequently lower costs for enclosing large areas in rural settings. On the lower end of the food chain, reducing the populations of voles and mice can reduce the incidence of winter damage. This is accomplished with year-around trapping or baiting. (Board member Ilona Farr recommends these [traps](#))

January is the time to order scion wood. Generally, we have a good selection of apple and some sour cherry scion wood at the grafting workshop in April. But, if you want something in particular, or are grafting pear, plum or apricot, then you should either order scion wood or ask another member who has what you want to cut and bring you some. There are numerous sources of scion on the internet. Three sources that I have used regularly have been [Fedco](#), [Cummins Nursery](#), and [Purvis Nursery](#) run by founding APFGA member Bob Purvis. Bob is a great source since he has a good idea of what will work in Alaska. In the Northern tier of states, ripening times of mid-August are dependable for our climate. A ripening time of September 1, in New York will only be ripe at the end of a good Alaska summer (2,700+ GDD/42°) in Southcentral Alaska.

The club's annual grafting workshop is tentatively scheduled for Saturday afternoon on April 15. More on that will be announced as we secure a location. For those that are new to the club, the grafting workshop is an opportunity to obtain scion wood, purchase root stock, and obtain instruction on grafting. Basically, we provide the ingredients for you to make your own fruit tree!

Most of the time, creating a fruit tree at the grafting workshop is as simple as purchasing a rootstock and marrying it to the desired scion. However, sometimes an inter-stem (a variety grafted between the rootstock and scion) is recommended for certain rootstocks to increase grafting compatibility or impart other desirable characteristics. For example, when grafting Harbin Siberian pear rootstock (*Pyrus ussurienses*) Bob Purvis has made the recommendation to graft an inter-stem of Summercrisp. The inter-stem helps bridge the genetic gulf between Asian pears (rootstock) and European pears (scions). Similarly, Fred Deiser has recommended that I graft a Feller plum inter-stem onto Krymsk 1 to gain better grafting compatibility and precociousness. For those wishing to create apple trees with multiple varieties, I would recommend an inter-stem of Ft. Mac/Mac. It has shown excellent grafting compatibility and precociousness in our orchard.

If you are a new member and did not have the opportunity to reserve rootstock for the grafting workshop, do not despair! We have ample quantities of *Malus baccata* apple, and some Krymsk 5 cherry, *Prunus americana* plum, Manchurian apricot, and Siberian pear rootstock still available that you can reserve. Just [email me your order](#) and you can pay and pick them up at the grafting workshop. All members enjoy wholesale pricing that ranges usually from around \$2 for apple rootstock up to \$8 for others that are ordered in smaller quantities. The final prices are set after we know the shipping costs.

Next week Thursday on January 12, at 7:00 pm, we will have our second winter program! We are excited to have Bob Thaden, owner and wine maker at [Tongue River Winery](#), give a presentation on making fruit wines. Bob is an [award-winning](#) wine maker and was a pioneer in making wine from haskaps. He also works with other fruits commonly grown in Alaska such as sour cherry and black currant. Click the link on January 12, at 7:00 pm to [join the meeting](#) on Zoom. If needed, here is the full [Zoom invitation](#).

The following week on January 19, at 7:00 pm we will have a Board of Directors meeting. You are welcome to click the link to [join that meeting](#) on Zoom at the appropriate date and time. Here are links to the [minutes](#) from the last meeting and the [proposed agenda](#).

Finally, just a reminder to renew your APFGA membership for 2023 if you have an annual membership. You can do this quickly online on the [APFGA website](#). To skip the hassle of renewing annually, you might consider a lifetime membership.

Hope to see you on Zoom for Bob's presentation next Thursday!

All the best,

Mark Wolbers  
President, APFGA