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Hello Fruit Growers!

The weather gods smiled on us at the end of July. The day of our orchard tour (July 22) began a streak of 6 consecutive rain-free days, the longest streak of dry weather of the summer so far here in Anchorage. Trees that had been stifled by the constant wetness are putting on some much-needed growth with the increase in warmth and sun. August seems off to a good start, but it may just be a matter of time before the Omega High Pressure moves East and our traditional late summer rains begin.

Below is a comparison of the Growing Degree Day (GDD) accumulation for the past month and our total to date compared with the previous two years at our orchard in East Anchorage.

Year:	July:	Total to Date:
2021	635 GDD/42°	1625 GDD/42°
2022	663 GDD/42°	1835 GDD/42°
2023	635 GDD/42°	1435 GDD/42°

July is generally our warmest month of the summer. August averages around 520 GDD/42°. At least 2000 GDD/42° are required for early apples while mid-season apples like Prairie Magic and Carroll require 2300 GDD/42°. So, unless August is an unusually sunny month, it is unlikely that the early apples in the Anchorage area will be ripe until the first week of September. Mid-season apples may be slightly under-ripe at the close of the growing season especially if we get a severe early radiative cooling event (clear night) before the end of September.

As you can see in the photo above, cherries (Juliet-12mm) are beginning to color. With the unusually wet early summer, I have noticed a fair amount of [cherry leaf spot](#) in our orchard. This is a fungal infection that can affect the leaves of tart cherries and other fruits, but seems most prevalent here on sweet cherries, Nanking cherry, and a variety of sour cherry called Danube. I have picked up and trashed any dropped leaves, and pulled leaves that are heavily infected. I then sprayed with Captan to hopefully slow further spread. If you spray Sulfur or Captan, remember that you need to wait two weeks after having sprayed any kind of horticultural oil, including Neem oil.

On the berry front, Haskaps (Aurora below) are ripe or will be soon. If you find a lot of moldy berries, it may be an indication that your bushes need some thinning to increase air-flow and light penetration. The older varieties like the “Blue” series can grow quite thick with multiple layers of branches. And all haskaps have a tendency to hang to the ground unless pruned up. Bushes that mound on the ground trap even more moisture in their canopy which in wet seasons can cause heavy losses to mold.

June bearing strawberries (Cavendish below) are finishing up. In the lower 48, renovation is a common practice after harvest. This is when the rows are narrowed, leaves are mowed off the plant to rid the plants of bugs and disease, and then they are fertilized. However, I am coming to the conclusion that not everything in this practice is helpful in Alaska. I believe it may be a mistake to mow off the leaves. The lower 48 has the equivalent of 3 or 4 Alaska months of August to regrow and strengthen the plants after mowing. We only have 4-6 weeks. Our insect and disease pressure is low in Alaska. Consequently, I think the plants may be stronger going into winter if the leaves are left alone. Fertilize with one cup of fish emulsion in 2 gallons of water per 10 feet of row when the plants are done fruiting.



Raspberries are beginning to color (Killarney above), as are black currants. Remember to keep your raspberries well picked if the weather is wet. Mold is a concern and you should try to gently drop any moldy berries to avoid spreading spores. If you have a lot of trouble with mold, then next year you should take steps to increase the airflow around your plants. I select the new canes (primocanes) that I want for next season and prune out the remainder as one way to increase air circulation. If you are growing raspberries on wire, this is also the time to make sure they are tied down. We invariably get a wind event just as the berries are ripening.

Blueberries (Northblue above) will be turning color soon. You should give them their second and final treatment of fertilizer one month after bloom which will be the end of the first week of August this year. Two Tablespoons of fish emulsion per gallon of water will treat 25 square feet. This is also the time to encourage upright growth. Check the interior of your plants for the green new shoots and guide them through the canopy so they grow straight up. If this season is short, there may be quite a few unripe berries left on the plant. But those that do ripen will be yummy!

Although running behind, apples are sizing well with mid-season apples such as Prairie Magic, Carroll and Lee 27 at 40-45 mm. Later in August, the trees will complete their growth for the season and set a terminal bud. At this time the shoots stop growing and the new wood begins to harden or lignify. This is the time to prune espaliered trees and, if it's not too late, to do some summer pruning if desired. Former APFGA President Doug Ott cautions that fall pruning can slow the tree's move into dormancy, leaving it more exposed if followed by a severe hard freeze. If you are inclined to summer prune, here is a [video by Orin Martin](#) on the subject that you may find interesting.

Fred Deiser sent me an article on painting tree trunks with white latex paint published in Fruit Grower News in March, 2012. The article detailed the benefits of painting the trunks of fruit trees to not only prevent [sun scald](#), but to also to help protect trees from rodent damage. Fred notes that they have painted their trunks for years and haven't had shrew or rabbit damage. The article recommends using a brush to apply white latex paint full strength. If you are doing a large orchard the paint can be diluted 50/50 so that it can be sprayed.

We will need to submit the club's rootstock orders for next year in early September. Please click the link and send me your [2024 rootstock order](#) sometime this month. You can still order the G.890 apple rootstock and OHxF97 pear rootstock along with everything else on the list. Price on the G.890 will be around \$3 plus shipping.

For those who dream of growing hazelnuts, you might want to checkout the [Second Annual Wisconsin Hazelnut Week.](#), August 21-25.

And finally, a reminder that Dan and Nancy Moore have invited the club to Big Lake for a potluck barbeque and orchard tour on Saturday, August 19, starting at 11:00 am. Bring something to share. Dan and Nancy will supply brats on the grill with all the trimmings and drinks. Click the link for directions to [Fire Apple Orchard](#).

All the best,

Mark Wolbers  
President, APFGA

