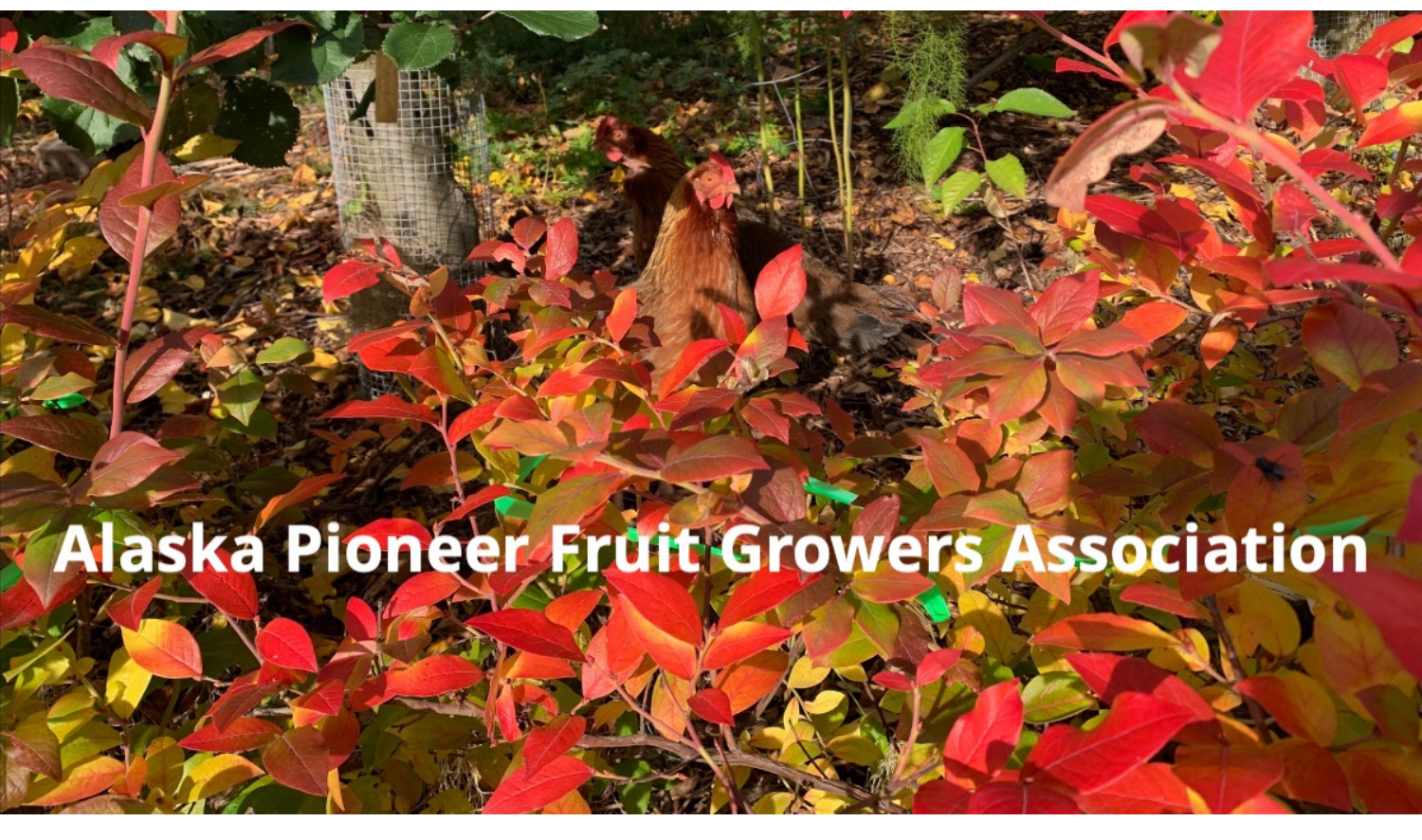


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Hello Fruit Growers!

Our orchard in East Anchorage experienced a long and colorful fall as seen in the photo above of our chickens hiding behind a blazing Northblue blueberry. Clearly, the impact and rate of global warming is heightened in northern latitudes. According to the UAF article "[2025 growing season one of the longest in Fairbanks history.](#)" the growing season there has expanded by 38 days over the last century!

At our orchard in East Anchorage, we define the end of the growing season not by the first freeze, but by when the temperature drops below 28° F. for more than 4 hours. That is when freeze damage can occur to apples. We had a light frost with a low of 32° on September 28, then a moderate frost with a low of 30° on October 10, followed by a hard freeze on October 19 with 9 hours duration of temperature below 28° reaching a low of 24° F. In between those events, temperatures stayed above freezing and we were still accruing Growing Degree Days (GDDs). I pulled our remaining State Fair, and Kinderkrisp apples (brix 13-14°) on October 17, in anticipation of the radiative cooling event (clear sky) to come.

To better understand the growing conditions in Alaska, I have been encouraging growers to invest in temperature loggers to measure the Growing Degree Days (GDD) in their particular micro-climate. Every place in Alaska is a micro-climate depending upon your proximity to the ocean, elevation, land slope, etc. Please [email me](#) if you would like information on purchasing the equipment for measuring GDDs at your location. The cost for a basic system and software is around \$300.

To begin filling a data gap, I have tracked Growing Degree Days and general weather-related growing events for the past 5 years. Although not the warmest summer in total, the month of October 2025 was the longest extension of the growing season of the past 5 years and accrued the most GDDs for that month with a total of 101 GDD/42° versus an average of 40 GDD/42°. The end dates and total GDDs for the past five seasons at our orchard in East Anchorage are as follows:

Year:	End Date:	Season Total:
2025	10.19.25	2603 GDD/42°
2024	10.14.24	2340 GDD/42°
2023	10.1.24	2365 GDD/42°
2022	10.13.24	2725 GDD/42°
2021	9.22.24	2420 GDD/42°

I should point out that the GDD amounts are reasonably accurate but probably have a variance of up to +50 GDDs. This is because we set an arbitrary date of April 1, to begin counting GDDs. For a more consistently accurate count, we should start GDD accrual at the point that trees are [exiting endo-dormancy](#). But to know this, we would need to know the number of chill hours that our apple cultivars require, and we would need to be able to count chill hours. I have requested that a Utah model chill hour calculator be added to the software I use to calculate GDDs, but to no avail at this point.

To put this another way, last winter was unusually warm and it was likely that our trees had mostly met their chill hour requirements by April 1. So, any heat units from that point on were accurately reflecting plant development. But after a winter that had started early and stayed consistently cold it is likely that at the beginning of April, some heat units were still needed and used to complete the tree's chill hour requirement before beginning seasonal growth. So, in that case the GDD number may be somewhat higher than what really happened plant development-wise.

It is also useful to keep in mind that in Southcentral Alaska, our growing season continues beyond mid-September only with the blessing of cloudy nights. In 2021, the night sky cleared on September 22, ending the season in the Anchorage area. APFGA advises members to plan for apples and fruits that will ripen in at least the average years in your micro-climate. For us personally, that means focusing on apple cultivars that can achieve acceptable sugar levels with 2400-2500 GDDs/42° and are generally ready by the last week of September.



Our fall was extended to the point that we actually cropped a couple of Fall Gold raspberries on the first-year primocanes (photo above). We grow this everbearing or primocane fruiting raspberry for fruit on the earlier ripening second-year floricanes. The primocane berries are generally green when stranded on the plants due to the onset of winter. The long and relatively mild fall is even allowing the ripening and harvest of the second bloom of lingonberries. Commercially available lingonberry cultivars often have both a spring and summer bloom. The lingonberries that I brought to the fruit tasting were from the spring bloom.

There was some good fruit grown this season. You can view the [2025 Fruit Tasting](#) results by clicking the link or going to the "Research" tab on the APFGA website ([www.apfga.org](#)). Many thanks to Mark Findlay for posting and organizing the fruit tasting data collection, and to Lisa Bulkow and Deb Blaylock for their help inputting the results into the spread sheet. Please note the locations where the fruit was grown, and whether it was grown outdoors or in a greenhouse/high tunnel. In the future, it would be great to have a team armed with brix refractometers going through the entries and recording the sugar amounts of the fruit being tasted.

In other news, the Director of the State of Alaska Division of Agriculture signed a quarantine order effective Sept. 1, 2025, to stop the importation, transport, and sale of *Prunus padus* (commonly known as European Bird Cherry tree or Mayday tree) and *Prunus virginiana* (commonly known as the Canada Red or Chokecherry tree). In many parts of the state, these species are creating invasive monocultures and displacing native trees, shrubs, and forbs.

The Controlled Environment Agriculture ([CEAg](#)) [World Conference](#) is coming up on November 19-21, in Durham, North Carolina. This is a conference entirely dedicated to growing in greenhouses or high-tunnels. The [Great Lakes Expo \(GLE expo\)](#) takes place December 9-11, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I will again be attending this conference and taking notes. Although I attend for the fruit sessions, the conference is quite comprehensive regarding agriculture.

Member Tim Pritchett passed along a helpful tip he gleaned from Randy Arduser (Clark Orchard) concerning the use of [flexible garden wire](#) to tie raspberry canes (or any plants for that matter) to their wires/stakes in preparation for winter. I purchased a roll and found the product works great and is easily cut with pruners. Even better, the cut pieces can be reused the next season.

APFGA put out the call in August for rootstock requests for spring 2026. We need to place our orders no later than September to ensure that we get what we want. We try to anticipate the needs of our members and order extra for them (you) and the grafting workshop in April. If you haven't submitted a rootstock request, I encourage you to do so. This reserves the rootstock for you. If you wait, and we should run out, then you will be out of luck. To [submit a rootstock request](#), just click the link to let us know what and how many you would like.

On Thursday, November 13, at 7:00 pm we will have our Annual Membership Meeting on Zoom. This is an important meeting! We discuss what the club did over the past year, and everyone shares their experience and observations from the past season. It is the one meeting of the year where membership participation is critical to the operation of the club. Every year, half of the club's board of director seats are up for election. This year Doug Damberg, Michael Burke, Keoki Kim, and Dawn Cowan are up for election. To enable club activities to continue uninterrupted, it is necessary to have a quorum of 35 members attend the Zoom meeting. So, please join us. Just click the link at 7:00 pm to [join the meeting](#). Here are the links to the [proposed agenda](#), past [minutes](#) and full [zoom invitation](#) if needed.

The following week, provided we have successfully conducted business at the Annual Membership Meeting, we will hold a board meeting to decide what duties each of the board members will take on. Members are always welcome to attend. The Board of Directors meeting will take place on Zoom on Wednesday, November 20, at 7:00 PM. Click the link to [join the meeting](#). Here are the links to the [proposed agenda](#), past [minutes](#), and full [zoom invitation](#) for the Board of Directors meeting.

Finally, it is my pleasure to announce that on October 8, the APFGA Board of Directors unanimously voted to award Honorary Lifetime Memberships to Randy and Sonja Arduser in recognition of their many years of service in advancing the mission of APFGA. The Board and I extend our heartfelt congratulations on this well-earned recognition.

All the best,

Mark Wolbers
President, APFGA