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Hello Fruit Growers!

This year, the weather in Southcentral Alaska during the month of July was pretty good. For the most part it was dry and sunny with warm temperatures frequently in the 70's. The only significant rains were .6" around July 24 and .65" on July 30. All other rains were trace or less than .1". June bearer strawberries are winding down while raspberries and haskaps are coming on with black currants and blueberries to shortly follow. Photo above is of ripening Black Gold sweet cherries.

In our East Anchorage orchard ground temperature at 6" is averaging around 62° F. which is 3° warmer than last year at this time. Below are the Growing Degree Day (GDD) amounts for July, the 4-year average for the month, and the current GDD year to date (YTD) total.

July 2025	Average	YTD total
880 GDD/42°	627 GDD/42°	1560 GDD/42°

August averages 550 GDD/42°. At least 1900-2000 GDD/42° are required for early apples (Parkland, Rescue, etc) while mid-season apples like Prairie Magic and Carroll require 2300 GDD/42°. So, depending on the number of warm sunny days, and your individual micro-climate, it is likely that the early apples in the Anchorage area will be ripe sometime at the end of August or beginning of September. Mid-season apples will follow two-three weeks later. The end of the growing season for apples is dependent upon when we get a severe radiative cooling event (clear night) that puts the temperature below 28° F for more than 4 hours.

Below are photos of plant development in our East Anchorage orchard as of July 31, 2025. Prairie Magic apples are averaging 50-60 mm. Bush cherries are turning red, Evans cherries are beginning to move to straw color and average 13-17 mm.



The following is a list of fruit growing tasks to consider doing in August:

1. If you haven't applied your second round of fertilizer to your blueberries, do it now (Fish Emulsion 2 Tbsp/gal/25 sq. ft.).
2. Remove oldest leaves from strawberry plants leaving some of the newest leaves and fertilize if needed (Fish Emulsion 2 Tbsp/gal/25 sq. ft.).
3. For raspberry airflow, keep things pruned around floricanes and selected primocanes.
4. Put up yellow jacket traps if insect pressure is high.
5. Harvest haskaps, raspberries, blueberries, currants and gooseberries as they become ripe. Test fruit for ripeness and pick. In damp conditions, mold can spread rapidly if ripe fruit is not picked on time. Highly perishable fruit like raspberries and haskaps should be processed or go immediately to the freezer unless they will be consumed quickly.
6. Submit a soil test. Remove any mulch or sod and take a soil core of the top 6" in various places of your orchard floor and mix them together. Send off a quart bag of soil to the [lab of your choosing](#). Members have used Midwest Laboratories, Brookside, Soiltest, and International Ag Labs. The UAF Cooperative Extension Service has more information on soil sampling/testing and an online farm and garden [soil calculator](#).
7. Plant grafted trees towards the end of August once they have set terminal buds. This timing gives them a good opportunity to get settled before winter and are then ready to go next spring.
8. On espalier pome trees, prune shoots to base leaf whorls once terminal buds have set or branches begin to lignify.
9. Train new branches/grafts and/or train whips of newly grafted trees.
10. Train new shoots on blueberries to grow upward.

Member Tim Pritchett texted me on July 23, saying that because of the dry weather he was receiving reports of spider mite damage on raspberries. If this is an ongoing problem, often the mites can be hosed off with water. If caught earlier at the beginning of fruit development, raspberries could even be sprayed with neem oil to knock down mite numbers. However, mites may just indicate a broader issue of plants being crowded and/or stressed due to a lack of adequate water and/or fertilizer.

Believe it or not, it is time for the club to begin submitting rootstock requests to our suppliers. When you let us know now what you want for next spring, it really helps us to understand what amounts we should order. Please take a minute and submit your rootstock request for Spring 2026 by August 10. Just click the link and [email me your order](#).

In other news, those interested in mason bees may want to check out the [Annual Orchard Bee Association Conference](#) October 23-25, 2025 in Woodinville, Washington. For those interested in learning more about hazelnut cultivation, the 2025 [Wisconsin Hazelnut Week](#) is planned for August 19-22, 2025. The [Controlled Environment Agriculture](#) (CEAg) World Conference and Expo will be in Durham, NC, November 19-21, 2025. This would be the conference to attend to learn about the latest advances in structures, systems and methods for growing under cover.

Member Stephen Gerlek asked me to post a position opening for the Anchorage Soil and Water Conservation District (ASWCD). The ASWCD has a position open for a District Manager to run the office, lead a small team of professionals, work with an experienced Board of long-term Alaskans, and help define what urban conservation means for Anchorage. This of course includes Urban Agriculture and urban orchards from big to small. Click the links to view the [position description](#) and summary of [job duties](#).

About this time of the year, I begin looking for presenters for our Winter Speaker Series. If you are interested in presenting or have a suggestion for a speaker, please [email me](#). We provide a \$200 honorarium to speakers.

Each November we hold our annual membership meeting to elect members to serve on the board of directors. The term of service is for two years, and each year half of the positions are up for election. If you have an interest in serving on the board of directors, or wish to know more, please [email me](#). For most of the year the board of directors meet once a month on Zoom. Being on the board is a great way to learn more about growing fruit in Alaska and to help Alaskans grow their own fruit!

A reminder that Dan and Nancy Moore have invited the club to their Fire Apple Orchard in Big Lake for a potluck barbeque and orchard tour on Saturday, August 9, starting at 11:00 am. Bring something to share. Dan and Nancy will supply brats on the grill with all the trimmings and drinks. This is one of the highlights of the summer! They grow just about everything that can be grown outside in Alaska. Don't believe me, check out their [plant inventory](#). Have questions about growing a particular fruit? These are the folks to ask. Click the link for [directions to Fire Apple Orchard](#).

Hope to see you there!

Mark Wolbers
President, APFGA

