

## Summer 2007 Issue

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# Just Picked

Newsletter of the  
Upper Midwest Organic  
Tree Fruit Growers Network  
Volume 3, Issue 3, Summer 2007

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## Welcome to the Summer Issue of Just Picked

Just Picked is the newsletter of our Network, now in its third year. Thanks to the Risk Management Agency of the USDA we are able to have this newsletter. It is available in hard copy and on our website, the best place to get past issues.

In this issue you will find registration information on the August 22 tour of the organic tart cherry and apple plots being established by the University of Wisconsin at its Sturgeon Bay location. Also, if you couldn't make it to John Armbruster's Orchard Walk, the next best thing is to read about it. Jim Koan of Al-Mar Orchards is getting remarkable, early stage findings in his pigs in the orchard project. Eric Mader brings us another fascinating article on pollinators and the colony collapse disorder. Bill Wright wants your input to develop an organic apple marketing project next year. List-serv topics, with notice of photos available on our website of grape arbor trellising in the orchard, an invitation to join the list-serv, the Network Exchange, and Jack Knight's request for information to catalog apple storage characteristics are also within. Tom Rosenfeld of Earth First Farms invites other growers to share pricing information via a market survey tool he is willing to develop.

Please note that the next Midwest Organic Farming Conference, to be held February 21-23, 2008, will include Farmer – Researcher Roundtables. We hope there will be research presented on organic tree fruit production.

Any questions on the Network, please feel free to contact me. Any questions on organic tree fruit production or marketing, please use our extensive set of resources on our website, past issues of this newsletter, and the other many growers on our list-serv.

- Deirdre Birmingham

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## Two Brothers Orchard Walk – A Sweet Deal

**I**t took a bit of arm-twisting, but John Armbruster has set a new precedent for newer growers to host Network Events. Getting together in an orchard context facilitates the sharing of information among participants interested in improving their organic production and marketing of tree fruits, which is the Network's purpose. And it benefits the orchard host. John wrote: "We too learned a lot from the day that will be helpful for our orchard...I look forward to attending a few more of these myself."

One does not have to have all the answers to host an event, because no one does. There are many in this Network who are getting an orchard started or even planning on starting one. So seeing the early years is just as valuable as seeing an established orchard.

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A project of the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service  
Funded by the USDA Risk Management Agency



Two Brothers Orchard....From page one

The idea of John hosting our Network came from Bob Johnson, who has been John's orchard consultant and coach. The pressure was eased on John by getting Bob, who is a natural-born, hands-on teacher, to share from his vast wealth of experience from 30 years of tree fruit production and marketing. Bob's enthusiasm for organic growing makes him a great teacher and coach. (See our Spring issue for the pruning clinic he lead.)

So what did we do, see, and learn on our July 10th tour? We started in John's tidy, former dairy barn, where he displayed the organic products he uses in his orchard, including calcium sulfate added to the soil, particularly for Honeycrisp, and Serenade, a bacterium-based spray for fire blight and apple scab control. He uses potash in the fall to supply potassium. He gets his supplies from nearby Cashton Farm Supply that caters to organic growers. He showed the 10-foot Best Angle-brand stakes and the tape he uses to train his trees, along with the clips from the hardware store and a tough, plastic strapping material he uses for limb-spreading.

He also had on display his 3-ring binder that organizes in detail, one section for tart cherries and one for apples, the varieties and rootstocks he uses, his orchard layout, soil fertility needs and plans, strategies to address insect pests and diseases, and establishing beneficial insect gardens.

John's sons displayed their ability to recognize insect pest and disease damage from damaged fruit that John had gathered. From across the room he said, "OK, Matthew, what is this damage?" And eight-year old Matthew correctly identified scab and then codling moth damage. He next asked five-year old, Joe, to show his stuff, who correctly identified, again from across the room, plum curculio damage. More on these guys later!

Bob Johnson further demonstrated how to distinguish one type of damage from another. As soon as you see codling moth damage, often noted by the frass pushing out of the hole they eat through the apple, remove and destroy the apple.

Bob brought sample branches of afflictions he could not find in John's apples, thankfully. He passed around a young dead branch with the typical shepherd's crook symptomatic of fire blight. Fire blight starts at blossom time, when one should apply streptomycin or Serenade. The fire blight bacterium can later spread to cause tip shoot blight.



Codling Moth Damage

Another branch had lightly bronzed leaves from mites. A third branch displayed Honeycrisp suffering from Ca-deficiency, a typical problem with this variety. Calcium should be applied to the leaves about every 10 days, which John did three times this spring, with good results. Bob noted that Honeycrisp is also susceptible to tarnished plant bug damage.

Bob noted John's use of Serenade and some of its advantages for John's situation. Bob warned that frequent uses of sulfur against apple scab often kills predatory mites, letting leaf-damaging mites take hold. Bob spoke from the heart about sparingly using whatever product one chooses. Insects, fungi, bacteria, mites, and more are becoming resistant to the natural and synthetic technologies we use against them. To maintain beneficial insect populations, one must have some level of the damaging insects they need. Bob advised that growers use a hand lens in the orchard to scout for insect pests. Pay particular attention to the underside of leaves as many insects feed in more shaded area and on the plant veins.

For apple maggot (AM) management, John saw that Bob had purchased plastic balls from McDonald's (used in their restaurant playlands). Since Bob got the last of those balls, John found similar ones at Toys R'Us. He coats them with tangle trap, hangs them by paper clips, and monitors them for AM.

John uses pheromone-baited traps to monitor for codling moth (CM). Bob noted that the threshold was nine CM per trap some years ago, but is now down to five due primarily to pesticide resistance. When asked if granulosis virus is effective, some experience in the group seemed to indicate that it works well against CM.

From the shed, we ventured first toward his 1000 ft of raspberries, which many of us were delighted to pur-

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## Project Update! Integrating Organic Pig and Apple Production

If getting three more Berkshire sows this fall does not tell you that things are going well, the following will.

Our Spring issue of *Just Picked* congratulated Jim Koan of Al-Mar Orchards in Flushing, Michigan and Michigan State University researchers, David Epstein and Dale Rozeboom, on getting a one-year pilot study funded by the USDA Integrated Organic Program. Their project looks at the potential to integrate organic pastured pork with organic apple production. The project idea was Jim's, as he seeks to address two concerns: how to use the grass he was growing on the orchard floor, and to find the right kind of predator for the "dreaded plum curculio", the Achilles heel of organic apple production. He has tried Guinea hens, but found that though he could protect them from fox and coyotes, the hawks found them to be too tasty to resist.

The findings from just this spring and summer, barely three months into the project, are quite exciting. The one question as to whether PC larvae survive the pig's digestive system has been answered with a resounding no. Dale Rozeboom fed two hundred larvae to pigs under controlled, research station conditions and collected their manure. All larvae were destroyed except for one, and it was dead.

The other major question is whether the pigs will eat the June fruit drops. The 27 pigs produced by the three sows might answer that with a resounding burp. They ate nearly all the June drops in their first two days in their half-acre research plot. Jim was also pleased to see that they were giving him even better results than his "Swiss Sandwich Method" of weed and vegetation control under the trees, AND the pigs didn't require the use of Jim's tractor.

The pigs were introduced to their 'research plot' at two weeks, after weaning, when they each weighed about 20 pounds. As opposed to their mothers who preferred to lay in the shade of the apple trees, digging holes into the ground to further cool themselves when temps were often in the 80s and 90s, the young ones were used to competing for food and went after

it: apples, weeds and all. They were too small to dig more than an inch into the soil, managing to weed and turn the soil lightly. Both sows and pigs prefer to leave the more compacted drive lanes alone. Jim exclaimed, "These pigs were more efficient than I ever dreamed. The animal scientist was surprised too."

The professors involved are energized as they find that there is no literature on this topic and they get to chart new territory. To Jim, this lack is probably because

"this is not new, is rather simple, and was so common sense in earlier generations that why would they write about it?"



Pigs in the orchard

The pigs are not only having an impact on insects and orchard floor management but also on scab. They are breaking up the leaves in June and will do so again in the fall

after harvest. Disturbing the leaves and breaking them up to better decompose reduces the amount of scab inoculum on the orchard floor that would impact next year's crop.

Since Jim's main focus is apple production, he was concerned with timing the key animal husbandry needs with the needs of his trees, and keeping the animal husbandry work to a minimum. "For example, I don't want farrowing during bloom time or harvest," he explained. So far things can be timed fairly well. His first batch of pigs will be ready to butcher by December, when they are most easily sold at about 200 to 250 lbs each.

He plans to have two litters a year, which is normal for swine production. He plans to time their deliveries so that the sows farrow when his labor and management demands are lower in early spring and late fall. The pigs born in early spring will eat the June drops and finish on the fallen apples after harvest. They eat the pomace left from apple pressing throughout the year and any apples sorted out of the processing line. Jim has located an organic meat processor 60

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## China's Silent Spring

By Eric Mader, Midori Horticultural Services 608-445-3572, Info@MidoriHorticultural.com

In the last issue of Just Picked I discussed the growing concern surrounding Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), the mysterious nationwide illness afflicting honey bees, as well as steps growers can take to counteract this threat by conserving wild bees.

Now, midway through the summer, we have reason for cautious optimism. This latest honey bee crisis, (the cause of which has still not been identified), seems to be limited to a small group of beekeepers. In fact the hardest hit beekeepers have been the large-scale, migratory operators who transport thousands of hives around the county—a beekeeping equivalent to feedlot cattle. While everything from cell phones to transgenic crops have been implicated in the CCD discussion, the ultimate cause will likely be some more prosaic combination of stress related factors such as crowding, in-breeding, and the abuse of antibiotics.

None of this is to say that things are fine, however. The media hype of CCD has overshadowed a much bigger crisis. While the honey bee is momentarily fine on a global scale, other pollinators continue to go missing.

### So how bad are things?

A recent visit to China dramatically illustrated the problem. With nearly every inch of arable land under cultivation, China is a country remarkably devoid of wildlife—including pollinators. In fact during a bike trip through countless flowering crops in the southern Guangxi region, not a single wild bee was encountered. Small apiaries of managed honey bees could occasionally be seen, but often they were located in remote corners, away from crops and the corresponding assault of unbridled pesticide use.

Despite this, China, (as many of you astute readers probably know), is the largest apple producer in the world—generating almost 40% of the total global crop, and much of the frozen concentrate sold worldwide. But with few bees, how do they do it?

### Hand pollination.

While hand pollination is fairly common in many parts of Asia, (where issues of pesticide use and habitat



Closer to Home: Dead pollinators recently found in Rock County Wisconsin. A week earlier this field was sprayed with Pounce®, a synthetic pyrethroid.

conservation have been ignored), nowhere has the practice been as widely implemented as in China.

According to a recent article in *Acta Horticulturae* (Journal of the International Society of Horticultural Science), thousands of hectares are hand pollinated every year in the major apple producing region of Maoxing, located in China's southwest Hindu Kush Mountains. Astoundingly, most of this work is performed using small brushes made from the filter side of cigarette butts.

While things are not so dire here in the Midwest, our own country recently marked the extinction of Franklin's Bumble Bee (*Bombus franklini*), an insect formerly native to some of the richest apple producing regions in Oregon and northern California. Along with pesticide use and habitat loss, an exotic disease introduced by escaped captive bumble bee colonies has been implicated as the cause. Franklin's Bumble Bee is not the first pollinator lost to our continent; current indications are that it won't be the last.

In future issues I will continue to discuss pollinator issues relating to us both as fruit growers and as citizens of the world. Finally however, I'd like to again

*Continued on page 6*

## Network List-serv

When the Network first started in February 2004, the first thing we did was start a list-serv. That list-serv of about 18 addresses has mushroomed to 240. It is a great vehicle to continue the networking when we cannot actually meet together. We use it to share questions and answers, share information and ideas, post event announcements, and more.

One note of caution: While we don't pay for the list-serv, we pay for it by the free advertising that is attached to some of our emails in the form of links. Please ignore these. It is ironic because one of the rules of etiquette on a list-serv is that participants don't advertise products or services.

If you wish to join the list-serv, please email the Network Coordinator. Include your name and email address in the message. Once you join the list-serv, you receive instructions from Yahoogroups that includes how to review previous postings. You can go back to the archive and read the emails on any of these topics and more that interest you. If you wish to try out the list-serv, feel free to do so. It is easy to unsubscribe.

If you joined since the Spring (April) issue of Just Picked, the topics discussed since then are:

- shrubs for grape arbors
- fig crop in Bayfield
- identifying damage of codling moth, plum curculio, European apple sawfly
- controlling insect damage
- opinions sought on The Perfect Fruit Spray Kit as advertised by Gardens Alive!
- why apples are prematurely dropping from trees
- is bagging apples worth it
- KY website on bagging apples
- organic fruit and vegetables price list from Canada
- uncommon fruit discussion: sea buckthorn, juneberries
- all growers welcome to weekly IPM conference calls
- cedar apple rust
- disease resistant cultivars
- identifying freeze damage
- use of crop insurance
- Farm bill action items affecting organic growers
- bloom progress on different tree fruits in the region
- July 12 Orchard Walk and August 22 Field day announcements

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*Pigs, from page 3*

miles from his orchard. The late fall litter will finish on the June drops and go for sale in late summer.

Jim is pleased with the survival of 27 Berkshire pigs out of 30 born. The sows and pigs were housed in 10 ft sq. pens. Jim added plywood to the floors so that the sows could not root and make holes that piglets might get into. Furthermore, the piglets were attracted away from the sow by use of heat lamps. When the sow was ready she would call them to come feed. When they had their fill they would return to the warmth of their heat lamp and thus avoid having the sow lay on them, a problem typical when not using farrowing crates. Jim cut sod and added it to the pen to supply a source of iron, which is why pigs root the soil with their snouts.

Jim had no issues in terms of spraying when the pigs are in the orchard. By the time of June drop they are at the end of 1st generation codling moth. For three to four weeks, they are not spraying and this is an opportune time to bring in the pigs.

They have a lot more questions to answer and more data and measurements to take. In the fall they will evaluate the pig clean up of fall apples.

The early results of this pilot study are leading Jim and partners to apply for funds for a three-year project from the Integrated Organic Program. (Hopefully this program gets funded in the next Farm Bill and will be there for Jim and others. Call your representatives!)

Next year he wants to do bigger plots since the young pigs so aggressively went after the June drops and the weeds. The sows can stay on nearby pasture. He will try comparing how the piglets do in a mature semi-dwarf block with a ten-year old, trellised, dwarf block.

Jim is hoping that this will be a revenue generating enterprise that integrates well with apple production. If the project works out, he thinks it also make intensive IPM and organic more inviting to conventional growers. Highly toxic pesticides and their residues won't mesh with young pigs in the orchard.

In the meantime, stay tuned for further updates in the fall issue of Just Picked. Good luck, Jim! ó

## Marketing Organic Apples

During the Network meeting at the Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference in February, a discussion was held concerning topics for a future organic apple marketing seminar. The suggestions included:

- Co-ops
- U-pick operations
- Packing lines
- Post-harvest handling
- Handling competition
- Market research
- Food safety
- Linking vegetable CSA's and co-ops with fruit growers
- Value-added products
- Pricing
- Grading standards
- Consumer education

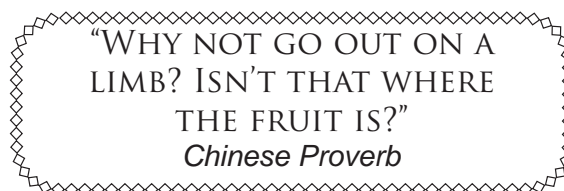
We certainly have an impressive list of topics to start the list. If anyone has more suggestions, please email them to Bill Wright at [wright\\_wp@co.brown.wi.us](mailto:wright_wp@co.brown.wi.us). We hope to put together a marketing program for early 2008. ó

## Grape Arbor Trellis Photos

There was quite a bit of discussion on the List-serv recently on grape arbor trellis in the orchard, including the use of deer fencing for the trellis. Del Stubbs of MN generously shared quite a few detailed photos to show how he constructed his trellis. They don't quite work in the newsletter so please check out our website for these photos, under INFORMATION, under OTHER. Thanks, Del.

## Apple Storage Survey

Jack Knight is still leading the charge on a survey of the storage characteristics of Midwest apple varieties as well as storage techniques. He'd be pleased to hear from readers with any information in this regard. He had a survey form in the Spring issue of Just Picked that you can use or please feel free to contact him at: Jack Knight, 603 Maple Rd., Luana, IA 52156; phone: 563-568-3308; [jackorganick@yahoo.com](mailto:jackorganick@yahoo.com)



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*Pollinators, from page 4*

remind readers how important alternative forage sources are for the resident pollinators in your orchard.

Most fruit blooms are so short that you'll miss them if you blink. The countless wild and managed bee species that do the real work on your behalf need food before and after this event. Yet, most of the orchards I routinely visit are carpeted in turf. Low growing clovers like White Dutch and New Zealand White are an obvious choice to fill this void. Both tolerate mowing, both provide ongoing summer forage for bees, and both are cheap to install. As was raised at the Wisconsin Apple Grower Association IPM Field Day in June, broadleaves, like clover, have the potential to suppress apple scab spores.

Another orchard floor addition I'd like to recommend is Siberian Squill. I'm having personal success with this as an understory plant in cane fruits, and there is no reason why it will not work below trees. As with clover, it tolerates mowing. However, the principle advantage to bees is its early bloom—often flowering while there are still patches of snow on the ground. Squill naturalizes easily, and no doubt some of you already have this small crocus-like flower growing around your home.

Lastly, don't dismiss low growing weeds like Creeping Charlie and dandelion as beneficial bee plants. Both provide much needed energy to nectar-starved insects emerging in the spring. Both can easily be mowed during the fruit bloom to remove competing flowers.

Happy harvesting! And more in the Fall issue of Just Picked. ó

## Attention Commercial Growers

by Tom Rosenfeld, Earth First Farms, MI

**P**icture this – you are in a conversation with a larger buyer – whether it is a broker, packer, processor or retailer – and they appear interested in securing one or more of your organic tree fruit varieties for their operation. Sooner or later the conversation will turn to price and you realize that you are entering into a negotiation with someone who has far greater market knowledge than you. That's a tough spot to be in and one that you will rarely win.

As producers of food, we should be the ones in charge of that conversation. The only way we can do that is to be armed with market data. There is some data available for organics, but all I can find is fresh pack prices in Boston and San Francisco. USDA puts out extensive market data for conventional crops (and even that can be hard to read), but how does that help the organic grower?

We, as organic growers, understand better than most the difficulty of producing a high-quality crop. That's the risk that we take. For larger growers, there are lots of risks associated with logistics of picking, packing, storing and transporting fruit to market. And then they face risk in the marketplace that they won't receive a fair price for the fruit, and on fair terms.

I have a proposal to assist with that market risk. ***If enough growers show interest, I would be willing to host a market survey tool.*** Here's how it would work. I will put together a basic form that you would use to send in market data. This would include the basics – variety, use (fresh, process, etc.), type of pack (for fresh pack), and the price. The information gathered for various growers will then be presented as averages, with the option of showing by state, if that is helpful. Growers will not be identified. In addition, the grower will not need to reveal the buyer or buyers.

If you think this would help you price your product and you want to participate, just send an email to [info@earthfirstfarms.com](mailto:info@earthfirstfarms.com). If enough growers participate, I will start gathering data in August and try to keep current through harvest and early winter. Everyone who participates will get to use the data as they see fit and we can then assess its usefulness after season.

*Tom is a new apple grower who is transitioning his 45-acre orchard to organic management in Berrien Center, MI (MI's most southwest county).*

## The NetEx

The Network Exchange, or NetEx, is for Network growers to use. Please use it as a Classifieds Ad section. NetEx allows Network participants to exchange information, at no charge, on services or things to share, buy, or sell. ***It is not for product or input advertising.*** However, for now, knowledge-based services provided by Network participants are fine. Other examples: exchange or share scion wood, find others to make bulk purchases, orchard consulting or pest scouting services, find orchard or processing equipment, host a work day, offer a seminar (such as grafting or pruning), and any other way to help us improve our organic production and marketing of tree fruits, except for product advertising.

### Flowers for Beneficial Insects

If you are interested in a group order to purchase flowering plants to attract beneficial insects to your orchard, please contact Carmen Armbruster at 608-634-2003 before October 2007. She is ordering Black-eyed Susans, Shasta Daisies, Purple cone flowers in packages to fill a 24 ft row, a 50 ft row, or a 75 ft row.

### Looking for Natural Fruit

Natural Direct, LLC distributes produce directly from farmers in northern Illinois to homes in the Chicagoland area. Organic certification preferred, but not required. Farm pickup is available. Contact Scott at 630-551-7878 or [scott@naturaldirect.com](mailto:scott@naturaldirect.com).

### B & J Consulting

Eco-system organics of fruit trees.  
Setup \* Maintenance\* Conversions  
Bob Johnson 608-624-3777  
Jamie Bjornsen 563-538-4546

## August 22nd Field Day at UW's Peninsular Agricultural Research Station !

Join Matt Stasiak of UW and Network participants on Wednesday, August 22, 2007, in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin at UW's Peninsular Ag Research Station to view the organic tart cherry and apple orchard blocks being established there. Patty McManus, UW Plant Pathologist has research looking at phototoxicity on cherry caused by use of copper for disease control. Her graduate student will show their work.



Matt flame weeding

The field day will be from 10 AM to 3 PM; rain or shine. Advance registration is required. Please use the enclosed form and register early.

Matt has supplied information on these blocks for our newsletter and website over the last two years. Please see the Winter (January) 2006 and 2007 issues of Just Picked. They are available on our website or by contacting the Network Coordinator. To recap varieties used, the cherry varieties are Montmorency and Balaton on Gisela-6. The apple varieties are Scarlet O'Hare, Sansa, Honeycrisp, Pixie Crunch, Florina and Nova Spy on a variety of dwarfing rootstocks.

Matt will cover at the field day, in addition to any questions you may bring,

- Ground preparation
- Weed management and mulch trials
- Orchard floor management
- Selection of rootstocks and varieties
- Orchard layout and spacing
- Soil fertility and nutrient cycling issues
- Wildflower plantings to attract beneficial insects
- Fungal leaf pathogens of cherry (leafspot, powdery mildew) and apple (scab, fire blight)
- Insect pest management:
- Experiences with NOP-approved products



Fun with tree fruit at Penninsular

*Two Brothers....From page two*

chase after the event. John emphasized the importance of pruning, which he did not feel he did enough of this year. Tilling the ground for a year in advance of planting aids in weed suppression as does the addition of wood chip mulch as soon as the bushes are planted.

John got his rapidly propagating raspberry bushes from his brother in central Wisconsin, but did not know the variety. For John's benefit several participants dispelled the possibility that they might be the variety Prelude, since John's do not bear in the fall and ripen earlier.

We next moved to John's adjacent orchard of 50 cherry trees of two varieties, Montmorency and Surefire, on standard rootstocks. They are spaced at 20 by 20 ft, and trained like apples. While the standard rootstocks do not need staking, he started the trees with stakes due to the strong winds in their area. The trees produced in their third year.

He did try sweet cherry knowing that they are not recommended for Zone 4, and as expected, they did not make it.

Disease and insects are not as much of a problem as



Metal pans discourage birds

are birds. Bob advised planting mulberry trees to attract the birds away from the cherries. We saw aluminum pans dangling on string, which rattled and shimmered in his windy area. John is finding that things that make noise and movement help deter the birds. Netting was more labor-intensive. He has aimed a shotgun at starlings.

Deer have not been a problem, most likely for lack of suitable habitat. He does use small bars of soap purchased from the Super-8 hotel. He hangs one per tree and changes them yearly to deter the deer that do venture through.

While he has not had a problem with diseases, cherries are susceptible to brown rot, leaf spot, and pow-

*Continued on page 9*



Two Brothers....From page 8

dery mildew. He applied Serenade this year for the first time right after petal fall. Bob noted that since cherries mature much sooner than most apples, two to three sprays against diseases suffice. Plum curculio (PC) is a little different. John uses limb-jarring.

We next ventured to his apple orchard of 150 trees of three varieties, Liberty, Honeycrisp, and Royal Cortland, on Bud-9 dwarfing rootstock. Liberty, a disease-resistant variety, which Alan Teach of Sun-Rise Orchard strongly advised he grow, is his newest planting. John noted the help Alan has been, someone John has gotten to know as he teaches his sons in North Crawford High School. John lamented that his Cortlands are a "scab magnet."

He started his spacing at 7' by 14' and found that that was too close. He now uses a 10' spacing.

He is experimenting with the use of Surround (a kaolin clay-based product) to deter plum curculio. Bob noted the thorough coating on the apples, highlighting the need to get the calyx coated where it can also help deter codling moth. The clay can be hard on sprayers, which should be cleaned right away. John uses a mild bleach solution. Surround may also be hard to get off finished fruit, particularly in the stem and calyx area where polishing brushes on sorting lines do not reach. Taking a soft brush by hand to each apple will, but obviously adds to labor cost.

On trees not treated with Surround he uses limb-jarring for PC control. This is where he called his sons into action. They whipped out a large piece of taped cardboard that covered the entire area below the tree. Then Matthew gripped a padded baseball bat and softened his batting swing to tap the tree stake. He and Joe dropped to their knees eager to identify any fallen plum curculio on the cardboard. They announced that none were found, even though these "budding young capitalists" are making 25-cents per PC they capture, and doing an effective job, as we noted.

Alan Teach provided John with a long, narrow, plastic strapping material to use for limb spreading. The

limbs are pulled down to a 45° angle in early June. John attaches the strapping material to a hooking device he purchases at hardware stores, and attaches to the stake near its base. He continues to loop from hook to branch, from hook to branch, until all branches on that side are in the desired position before he ties the plastic off on the hook. While he usually releases the strapping by now, he left it on for our benefit. When he released the strapping, the limbs remarkably stayed in place.

Carmen, John's wife, showed us the new area alongside the orchard and barn that is dedicated to beneficial insect plantings. Carmen prefers plants rather than seed to get an early start. Perennials rather than annuals are planted. Bob advised on getting plants

with multiple flowers, and flowers within a flower, such as plants in the carrot family, like Queen Ann's Lace. Carmen has chosen three plants: black-eyed Susans, Shasta daisy, and purple cone flower, and has teamed up with a supplier to offer a choice of plantings to other growers. (See NetEx for more information.)

The family sells their produce at the Viroqua Farmers' Market, and will start U-pick raspberries and selling to local stores this year.

John is working with MOSA to have his production certified organic next year. We benefited from Dave Ebbert of MOSA participating in the day along with Harriet Behar, a former organic inspector who is on MOSES staff.

After the walk, we enjoyed Carmen's cherry cobbler with a generous dollop of whipped cream, all of it organic. The comments on the feedback forms were overwhelmingly positive, and growers got to meet a lot of new faces and make new connections. All were appreciative of what the Armbrusters are doing and moreover, for letting us meet there to learn from them and each other. ó

*Photos courtesy of Harriet Behar*

**Just Picked** is a publication of the Upper Midwest Organic Tree Fruit Growers Network.

Our Mission is:

*To share information and encourage research to improve the organic production and marketing of tree fruits in the Midwest, and to represent the interests of growers engaged in such.*



Limb-jarring experts at work

**Upper Midwest Organic Tree Fruit Growers Network FIELD DAY REGISTRATION FORM**

August 22, 2007 UW Peninsular Ag Research Station, Sturgeon Bay, WI

Your Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Farm Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State and Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Register as early as possible and no later than August 15. Registration is \$18.00 per person to cover lunch and refreshments. Late registration after August 15 is \$20 per person.

# of people \_\_\_\_\_ x \$18 = \_\_\_\_\_

# of people \_\_\_\_\_ x \$2 late fee = \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: =

**Mail this form and check payable to MOSES to:** Deirdre Birmingham, Organic Tree Fruit Growers Network 7258 Kelly Rd, Mineral Point, WI 53565

Field days will be from 10 AM to 3 PM, rain or shine. Registration will be confirmed by email with directions to the field days on August 17.

All interested in more ecological approaches to tree fruit production are welcome. No host of Network events claims to have all the answers. They are simply sharing what they are learning with other open-minded growers and providing us an orchard context for discussion.

Any questions, contact Deirdre at deirdreb@mindspring.com or 608-967-2362.

The Upper Midwest Organic Tree Fruit Growers Network was started in 2004 for the purpose of sharing information and encouraging research to improve organic tree fruit production and marketing in the Upper Midwest. The Network is supported by the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services (MOSES) and the Risk Management Agency of the USDA in addition to other event sponsors. This newsletter is produced by MOSES, layout by Jody Padgham.

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