



JUST PICKED

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2

November 2014

From the Coordinator's desk . . .

I usually begin filling this space with some rambling on about the weather. For a moment I thought I'd try to do something different. But then . . . the weather has again been quite nuts so I won't be able to adjust my normal course of action quite yet. Maybe in the next newsletter!

As I write this I'm thankful I'm not in western NY watching my windows get buried in snow that is counted now by yards rather than feet. I'd hate to look at my orchard in such an event, though I'm sure it would make for some great stories later in life. Here in western WI it has been unseasonably cold since the beginning of November with temperatures more typical of January and incessant wind. All of a sudden orchard tasks switched to inside tasks. I'm optimistic that things may return to normal at some point and I can finish off a few things that are lingering in the orchard – I just need some time where my fingers can make it for an hour or two without losing their feeling.

With the late bloom this year I had really expected a good crop. Turns out we probably got a little too much cold last winter for fruit buds to be completely happy come spring. Our production on many of our tree fruits and grapes was down from last year. Some crops' production levels were severely impacted. Berries, as usual, were reliable and productive. If they just required a little less time to pick!

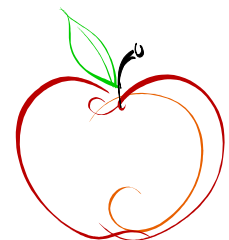
At our young orchard, we did learn a few things this year. We had good luck controlling codling moth with granulosis virus even after our tractor broke down at just the wrong time and I had to go out with the backpack sprayer (possible, but perhaps not desirable, on a shy acre of younger trees). Probably most significantly, we figured out our processing methods a little bit. There's still room for improvement, but we came out of 2014 with a lot of good recipes and processed goods for sale during the winter and early season next year. We're still trying to figure out what tasks to delegate to our one and a half year old son, as he seems to want to decide his daily duties himself which don't always (or ever) line up with our preferences.

OFGA?!

The big news: OFGA became the Organic Fruit Growers Association (OFGA) this year! I hope we can all begin to get used to the new acronym, as it has already confused a couple of folks. We have a new webpage (organicfruitgrowers.org), though the old one will still operate and redirect people to the new site. We are still making final adjustments to the site and hope to have all the glitches worked out and updates made this winter by the time our annual meeting rolls around. Our bylaws and Articles of Incorporation were formally amended to reflect the expanded scope and new name of the organization.

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Have a newsletter story or idea to share?

Email
Anton Ptak
OFGA Coordinator at
antonptak@gmail.com

Most importantly though, our focus now includes non-tree fruit such as various berries, brambles, and vines. Please help us get the word out as we look to incorporate berry and other fruit growers into our membership and network. If you have ideas about how to reach out to those grower communities or of resources for these other fruits that you'd recommend OFGA include in the resources page of the website, please let our Coordinator know!

I want to make a special mention here to make sure to check out the workshops that were just posted for the MOSES conference in February – their descriptions are on page 11 of this newsletter, so don't stop reading when you get through the articles! There's some great fruit-related workshops including some presented by OFGA members.

Board and officer Positions Open! Help steer the course of OFGA in the coming years.

Come February, two long-time board members' terms will be expiring. We extend a heartfelt thank you to both Greg Mund and Tom Galazen for their years of service on the board. Prior to the annual meeting, OFGA will accept nominations for between two and four board positions, including officers. At least one board position must be filled by a certified organic grower. OFGA is seeking producers of either or both small fruits and tree fruits. Please let the coordinator know if you are interested or have a nomination (but check with the nominee first!).

Field Day Notes

OTFA sponsored our annual field day up at two farms near Bayfield, WI. We began the day at Northwind Farm on a picture perfect 70 degree day in mid-August.



Photo: Harriet Behar



Growers Tom Galazen and Ann Rosenquist outlined their shared values that drive production on the farm, including land stewardship and minimizing off-farm inputs, as well as dedication to diversification. Northwind's relatively small acreage is home to an amazingly high number of plant and animal species. In addition to the tree fruits and berries that had brought us to visit, the farm also provides veggies to a multi-farm CSA and is home to turkeys and chickens. Tom estimated that some 85% or so of their fruit production came from berries and berry products and that tree fruit made up the balance.

A glaring reminder of the risks of fruit production in the midwest came from Tom's peach trees: 40+ stately, mature trees that had been lost in the harsh Winter. As seems to be the case with many growers, the berries pretty much emerged unscathed. The raspberry stands were quite impressive. Blueberries were in season as well, and were at just the right height for some of the folks in the crowd. Tom felt that the 4x6' spacing in his blueberry stands was probably a bit tight in retrospect. The lack of empty space between rows just seemed to make so much more impressive the bounty of the blueberry harvest. Indeed, the mature blueberry patch of a couple hundred bushes (some better described as small trees reaching almost 8 feet) was a site to see.

Photo: Harriet Behar

Following the tour, an amazing lunch was provided by Northwind staff and interns. Ann Rosenquist of Northwind came up with quite the spread, with almost all of the ingredients grown on site or procured locally. Meanwhile, Tom fielded some questions from attendees about his vast array of unique electric vehicles, most of which adorned with a number of various makes and sizes of solar panels. Northwind Organic Farm is unique in that it is entirely off-grid. Others took a look at the myriad of processed goods that are sold on-site and some of the nursery plants that are offered for sale. After filling our stomachs (probably more than we should have but who could resist!), we made arrangements for the drive over to the second location for the day at Elsewhere Farm.

Photo: Harriet Behar

Gathering at Elsewhere Farm near Herbster, farmer Clare Hintz introduced us to her production Permaculture orchards that included pears, apples, cherries, and small fruits, as well as some vegetables and chickens. Clare discussed her marketing strategy and partnerships with other producers. One of the impressive displays of the day was the robust apple press that she shares with another grower, each pressing apples during their on years and helping the other out on the off years – this helps manage the trait of some apple trees to display biennial bearing. Other items of note were water management methods that Clare employed on her place that were specific to her soil type and unique location. After all that, we bid adieu and piled in our vehicles for the long rides home.



Health and Berries

Paul M. Otten, Natura Farms & Berry Communications

Americans now spend an insane proportion of their income on “healthcare.” When I was 12 years old (that’s in 1950!), we expended an average of 4.5% of our income on healthcare, or \$4.50 out of every \$100 we earned.

In those days we also spent around 19% of our income on food, but that was mostly real food such as nourishing fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes and animal proteins. Because most garden soils still retained some natural fertility, their produce could well support and maintain health, energy and reproduction. When health is well maintained, little is needed for futile attempts to repair it after it’s broken.

Food in those days came mostly from farmers that still stewarded their soil and fields. Meals at home were common, and Mom prepared them from scratch with meats, milk, butter, cheese and eggs that were produced locally on small farms, instead of today’s typically huge animal confinement prisons. In the 1950s animals were mostly fed a natural diet of grass, hay, silage – green feed they were designed to consume. Consequently, human “healthcare” was not a major issue to the same degree it is today.

In our present decade, the USA spends close to 20% of its GDP on healthcare according to government statistics, and that “care” more closely resembles an industrial assembly line of sickness maintenance than an effective system to restore and maintain wellness.

How much is 20% of GDP? This astronomic number translates to nearly \$9000 per person. Put another way, we jointly on average, spend just short of \$25 per person per day on “healthcare” in this country, well over double what we spend on food - much of which is but a cheap chemical imitation manufactured to look like food. Having lived and witnessed the transformation of agriculture and food and healthcare, I can’t help but conclude – as many health practitioners, nutritionists, biochemists, other scientists and researches have – that the primary and most fundamental cause of our degenerating health is what we consume as “food.”

Food, real food, is designed to sustain health. After all, every molecule, or every cell, of every tissue, of every organ, of every system, of our entire body is made from the food molecules we choose to ingest. Food is the raw material from which we are assembled, made, maintained, repaired and empowered.

This is prime reason why we – my farm team and I – have chosen to farm FOR health. We build and steward our soil. Plants get almost all of their nutrients from the soil. So if the nutrients, mostly minerals, are not in the soil, they can’t get into plants. And if they don’t get into plants, they can’t get into animals and us. And if we don’t get what we need, we will suffer from malnutrition, from deficiencies. Consequently, we degenerate prematurely and incur huge healthcare bills in futile attempts to regain health. Even Bill Gates, with all his wealth, cannot buy health. He has to earn it by the daily choices of food and other health-sustaining choices he makes, or suffer the degenerative consequences. So also with you and me.

So what does all this have to do with berries? I am a firm believer in “grazing widely” as healthy animals do in nature. However, there are certain plants that are exceptionally valuable in building health, and berries are some of these. Interestingly enough, some berries are particularly powerful accumulators of antioxidants, particularly useful to us who live in an era and environment that requires these in mega doses. Thus we have chosen to work particularly with dark berries. The darker the berry, the higher the antioxidants! Among these are black currants, aronia, and elderberries.

Elderberries have a particularly long, long history of use for health purposes as well as gustatory delights. In addition to wide use by ancient indigenous peoples, early mention of them in western history goes back to Egyptian medicine over 3500 years ago. Hippocrates, widely considered the father of western medicine, referred to the elderberry plant as his medicine chest. He even wrote a book on elderberry use for health purposes.

It was only in June 2013 that scientists from all over the world congregated in Columbia, MO for **The First World Symposium on Elderberries**, under the auspices of the International Society for Horticulture Science (). There they shared among themselves and other participants. I was there for the part of it concerning their knowledge of “everything elderberry.” It was superb! And you missed it!

Health and Berries (continued from previous page)

Fortunately, Chris Patton, my elderberry partner, scholar and founding director of our Minnesota Elderberry Coop () was also there and took detailed notes. If you log on to the Minnesota Elderberry Cooperative website, you can read a one-page synopsis of many of these presentations. (Click on “Symposium”.) However, if you want the detailed science and research behind all these, you may order the official, peer-reviewed Acta Horticulturae (ISSN 0567-7572) of this symposium directly from the International Society for Horticulture Science (). Though published in Belgium, it is written in English. Then you can spend a lot of your winter days educating yourself and digesting what the best of the best of elderberry scientists know about this berry.

Besides growing elderberries for their flowers and fruit, propagating nursery plants to make them available to local and regional growers, I also do some farmer mentoring under the MOSES mentorship program. One of the questions that often arises with new growers is how easy or difficult is it to grow elderberries vs. other, better-known berries. Here is a summary of what I recently wrote to one of my berry mentees on this issue:

Elderberries are native to our country and have most likely never become a thriving industry because there was no mechanism to easily and speedily de-stem them. With the advent of the first mechanical de-stemmer this major obstacle has been removed.

We still import 90% or more of our elderberry products from Europe. There is a huge pent-up demand for producing our own, especially with the grassroots movement for local and regional food sources and exploding demand for natural medicine.

Elderberries are one of the least demanding berry crops to grow. One does not need to attend to them on a daily basis, thus can have acreage away from home and still be successful.

Elderberries can bring a relatively quick return on investment, producing a baby crop within 15 months of planting, especially when using MaxiPlug type starts.

Elderberries are much less perishable than strawberries or raspberries.

Elderberries have a longer harvesting window. With strawberries and raspberries, especially on hot summer days, one has to pick the ripe ones daily or risk losing some of the crop. With elderberries, we usually harvest them 3 or 4 times a season, about a week apart – in late August and September here in east-central Minnesota.

Elderberries also have a long marketing window, both fresh and especially de-stemmed and frozen.

Elderberries lend themselves well to steam distilling with our imported Finnish steam juicer and thus efficiently and cost-effectively extract and can or bottle the concentrated juice for use as a superb beverage or medicine. We use the same steam juicer for black currants, grapes, crab apples, tomatoes and much more. A friend of ours in Utah has been using these identical steam juicers for a quarter century to produce black currant and other berry juices on a large commercial scale.

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- Available in 3 forms: cuttings, MaxiPlugs, or bare root.

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Paul Otten (pmo@hof.net, 651-308-3801)
Berry Communications, 19060 Manning Trail N.
Marine on St. Croix, MN 55047



18 Months of Site Preparation at a Farm in Southern WI

Rami Aburomia, The Sweet Farm - Mt Horeb, WI

I am starting an orchard on our farm that we purchased after three years of searching in the area around Madison, WI. The Sweet Farm is just south of Mt. Horeb and was homesteaded in 1854. This farm has had a lot of different caretakers in its time. Not surprising we are the first to start an organic orchard and fruit farm on the land. It was a blessing finding a farm that would work for farming fruit and for our family, meeting the needs of commuting distance to work for my wife who has her own work passions and a good school system for the kids.

The acreage suitable for perennial fruits is on the small side, so all plantings will be high density. The farm is in three blocks, one acre of raspberries, blackberries, grapes, blueberries, and stone fruit, one acre of pears and late season apples which are more susceptible to scab and two acres of apples mostly scab resistant. Row spacing for the berries is 8', and all trees will be on 3' x 12' spacing, dwarfing rootstock and 5 wire trellis.



Photo: Rami Aburomia

When looking for land to put trees on, I ruled out any south or west facing slopes which can bring trees out of dormancy early. My ideal was a north facing slope. The Sweet Farm has gentle east facing slopes, and I'm hoping the early sun will dry leaves and fruit quickly. This also allows North-South orientation of rows across the slope. All the fruit trees will be on the higher sloping ground. For managing the understory I plan to use cultivation, mulch, organic herbicides, maybe even sand blasting and possibly cover crops in the tree row. I want strong tree growth for the first couple years, keeping the tree row mostly clear of competition will be a priority. The alleyways will be mowed.

I had the luxury of 18 months prep time to get the rows ready for planting in spring 2015. For the last 10 years I have managed a conventional (high level IPM) orchard 10 miles away and I was able to move machinery back and forth to prepare the ground. The land on the Sweet Farm was mostly poorly managed pasture, not over grazed, but weedy in spots, the worst creatures being bullthistle, burdock and (don't say it!) quackgrass. I considered working up the entire block and starting from scratch, but after watching and looking closely at the pasture species I felt it was valuable and wanted to keep what was there. So I have been working only the 6' where the tree row will go and keeping 6' alleyways mowed.

My goals for preparing the site were simple, deplete weed seeds in the tree row, kill perennial weeds in the tree row, do not allow any undesirable plants to go seed in the site. Also, add organic matter into the soil and amend soil based on soil test.

I started to prepare the soil in the summer of 2013 for planting of trees in 2015. I laid out tree rows and used glyphosate to kill plants in a 6' band for every row. This could have been done mechanically, but in balance I felt the ease of a single spray rather than multiple passes of heavy tillage made the herbicide justified. I then amended just the tree row strips with gypsum to increase calcium in the soil. These were the last unapproved (NOP) substances applied to the site. I chisel plowed all rows, not as deep as I would have liked but around 12 inches. After weeds began to regrow I waited until flowering and then tilled. The alleyways were mowed when undesirable plants began to flower. At the end of August 2013 I broadcast rye in the tree rows right after tilling and before rain. The rye at 2 bu/A germinated easily laying on the surface of wet soil, and was left for the winter. [All broadcasting of seed and gypsum I did with a push-type lawn seed/fertilizer

Site Preparation (continued from previous page)

spreader, By controlling the speed I could seed just the 6' row easily and get the rate I wanted by setting the flow opening. This was a cheap and easy way to seed and fertilize small strips of soil.]

In the spring of 2014 I mowed the rye when it was about 2 feet tall. I did not want a lot of fibrous material but rather lush green growth that would break down somewhat easily. In the wet spring the rye was difficult to kill even when tilled after mowing, and some continued to grow. Through the summer I allowed weeds to germinate and grow then killed them by mowing or tilling. During hot weather, in the areas with quackgrass I pulled a small one row C-shank field cultivator to bring roots to the surface multiple times. By August 2014 the tree rows were looking good. Perennial weeds were minimal and were mostly on the outsides of the 6' tree row and germinating weeds were less. Although soil structure suffered some by the continuous tillage (I could see some crusting after hard rains) the amount of organic matter I could see visually in the soil looked impressive. Tilling in and mowing of weeds before going to seed added to the organic matter. From soil tests, the blocks had OM of 3 to 4 in spring 2013. I will test again in spring 2015.

In mid-August 2014 I planted an oats and peas mixture 50:50 (100#/A) in the tree blocks, and a buckwheat and sorgum-sudan grass mixture 50:10 (60#/A) in the berry block. I purchased the oat/peas mix, and would have liked more peas in the mix to add nitrogen. The peas did not germinate well when broadcast even when lightly tilled to cover, they needed to be deeper in the soil. The oats germinated easily and covered soil and outcompeted anything else. The buckwheat mixture I made myself by adding about 10# of sorgum-sudan to a bag of 50# buckwheat. It was a fantastic mixture, the buckwheat germinated quickly and the grass helped to hold up the buckwheat when it got large. The grass added lots of biomass that would not have been there with just the buckwheat. I had hoped that these covers would grow until the first week of October or so, then winterkill. The buckwheat and sudan grass did winterkill. They were about 3-4 feet tall when winter killed. I did get some buckwheat seed produced, but I hope it won't be too much to deal with. The oats/peas growth and weed smothering was impressive, even the peas eventually contributed to the stand, every frost I would find the oat and pea leaves frozen but unharmed. Finally, by the first week of November, seed heads from the oats were being produced, so I mowed the oats/peas down with a rotary mower. The plant matter stayed on the soil and has made a good mulch for the winter.

In spring 2015 I will prepare the rows for planting trees by tilling in the residue of oats/peas and buckwheat/sudan then

use a small subsoiler to open up the soil as deep as I can for the new trees. In conclusion, I think the preparation went well. I would have liked a legume to play a bigger part in adding nitrogen the fall before planting. The peas could do this but better burial of seeds perhaps by using a drill or planter would be required for a better stand. Defining your goals will drive preparation decisions. For the Sweet Farm it was reducing weed pressure and keeping or adding to the existing organic matter. Like most everything in growing fruit, timing is everything, so having equipment at the ready will aid in a successful preparation.

Rewind: Apple Grinder Plans Come to Life

Anton Ptak, Mary Dirty Face Farm, Menomonie WI

I reviewed "The New Cider Maker's Handbook" by Claude Jolicoeur in a previous newsletter. In that book Claude details one design for an apple grinder. I took his design, adapted it for what I had laying around, bought a few parts, and threw them together.

When you throw things together, you need to throw them together a few times to get them to stick right. And so I did over the course of the summer after my wife and son had gone to bed. It was nice to have some lights in the barn now, even if the wiring is not to code and an extension cord has become as common as grass between the house and barn since I can remember. A great number of hours later, voila! An apple grinder. I have to say, it works fairly well after working out the kinks (there are always kinks). The most troublesome was finding the shaft parts and flanges used to mount the shaft to the wood drum. A one horse table saw motor doesn't hesitate at all going through all those apples in short order. I do need to add a safety guard to keep my friends' shirts from getting caught in the pulleys though! (this didn't happen)



Photo: Rachel Henderson

2014 Apple Orchard Reflections - John Knisley, Alternative Roots Farm

It was a year to remember in the apple orchard – fast paced, bountiful and requiring many late nights in the packing shed. The year has abruptly turned into a winter wonderland and only now am I able to start reflecting on the past growing season. Like many of you understand, keen observations in the orchard is one of the best tools in an organic orchardists tool box; the following are some of my insights and observations of the 2014 season in the orchard.

Lets start with the pruning season, beginning for me in mid – March and ending shortly thereafter. Remember only a few years back in 2011 we saw temperatures in the mid-80's during March. The slow spring warm up this year allowed for more timely pruning of the trees and enough time to consider each cut more thoroughly when not being faced with an early spring. This was our 3rd and final season of “restorative” pruning at the old orchard and the trees are starting to look like they are taking proper shape and structure.

April and May brought much rain to the farm, with the excess water and cool temperatures slowing down evaporation and keeping things moist for long periods of time. Fortunately there was a break in the weather just in time around the third week in May. The apple bloom here started on May 20th and was nearing the end by June 2nd with only short periods of rain and allowing our pollinator friends to do their business without interruption. Walks through the orchard after petal fall revealed that there was good pollination and fruit set – getting the heart racing to crunch into that first ripe apple of the year and a hopeful harvest. Monitoring after petal fall and early drops made it apparent that plum curculio was not a prevalent as it had been in previous seasons. The long cool and wet spring may have had some effect on their numbers, but as with all things in nature, there is balance. Curculio was not numerous, so cedar apple rust decided to make a strong appearance. I had not experienced cedar apple rust in the orchard up to this point, but now had found that it had taken hold on nearly every tree variety except Lodi. Sweet 16, Statefair, and Beacon were hit exceptionally hard by rust.

The time period in the season between bloom and the first harvest always seems to feel like it will never end – 2014 was particularly a game of patience. Although most apples were picked slightly later in the 2014 season than in 2013, early frosts pushed other varieties along to ripen faster. All things considered, harvesting dates seemed to remain close to previous years, with certain varieties deviating more than others. August in the orchard shows us our hand for the season - what pests we are dealing with and their numbers, how many apples we may potentially harvest, and whether or not we should be thinking about expanding cooler space. This August marked a milestone for Alternative Roots Farm with our organic certification! Years of hard work, diligent notes, and record keeping were paying off. The crop was coming along and it was appearing that Coddling Moth and Apple Maggot were in present in fewer numbers than previous years.



Photo: John Knisley

Orchard Reflections (continued from previous page)

September and October brought in a huge harvest, with beautiful large fruit and few blemishes. It is these months where I spend most nights in the packing shed sorting apples and catching up on 90's alternative rock – we all know that a little youthfulness benefits during these long but amazing weeks of harvest. In early September I was starting to see the fruits of my labor from pruning the previous seasons – without pruning there is no way the trees could hold that immense amount of fruit. The harvest kept us busy just picking good fruits, sometimes putting other important orchard tasks on the back burner. One task that was not given enough attention this season was picking up windfalls. Cleaning up windfalls daily or at a minimum weekly has been a very important aspect in how I manage pests in the orchard. I understand that each windfall may not contain the larvae of a Coddling Moth or Plum Curculio, but for those that do I want to pick them up and feed them to the pigs as quick as possible. The reason I put so much effort in picking up these apples is for a simple reason; for every pest that is eradicated is one less pest in the orchard that will reproduce and have many more generations of young – taking out one at a time will exponentially help my cause, I believe.

Winter has arrived with a vengeance and it is time to catch up on books neglected over the summer, enjoy a nice cup of cider and start dreaming of next season. It was an amazing season for some orchards and a tragedy for others – but with each passing winter comes another promise of spring and the hope for another good year.

Report of Northeast Iowa Fruit Growers - October Meeting

Perry-O Sliwa, Meadow Farm

When we deposited our potluck contributions in the kitchen, Don figured that we had time to tour his orchard before his pork roast and chicken would be ready, so off we set. Don has a great variety of apple trees, mostly on M.7 rootstock, often fertilized by his pigeon manure. He also has years of marketing experience, and knows which apples will sell to which ethnic group in which market. For many years he has gone to the Decorah Farmers Market on Wednesdays and to Rochester market on Saturdays.

We began south of the house where the trees include: Whitney Crab, Kingston Black (a cider apple that makes vintage cider all by itself. It's so sugary its hard to grind), Wolf River, Tremlett's Bitter “tastes like artificial sweetener” Classic English cider apple from late 1880's, Belle de Boskoop “searing acidity” good cooking and eating apple originally from the Netherlands. This variety grew more vigorously than the rootstock. Chenango Strawberry “best selling apple. Steady, dependable, good flavor”, Golden Russet “A profitable tree”, Siberian Crab, and Hoople's Antique Gold.

Main orchard varieties include Mother “excellent apple, peach like flavor, needs picking at just the right time”, Golden Nugget, Yellow Transparent, NW Greening, Wagner, St. Edmunds Pippin “Excellent russet”, Pineapple “excellent”, Dutchess “Pick when shows a little red. Won't hang on the tree”, Esopus Spitzenburg, Winter banana “not a very vigorous tree, should be grafted to larger root stock”, Kerry Pippin “hard early apple”.

Cultural concerns include black rot and southwest syndrome where bark on the south west side of the trunk suffers in the winter from freezing. It can be eliminated by white wash on the trunk or wrapping.

When upper branches of a tree don't thrive, Don sometimes prunes the main branch and lets two or three sprouts grow. He eventually selects the most vigorous branch to survive. Deer browse, tall plastic fences surround individual young trees. Weeds of concern in the orchard are quack grass, mallow, and burdock. Don sprays to control apple scab.

Don's list of trees he would not plant again are Gravenstein, Northern Spy, and Twenty Ounce. Once in the house, we enjoyed tasting and sharing our reactions to three unidentified apples. The peels had been removed so we could concentrate on taste and texture. We stood in a circle sharing comments like, sweet, sprightly, good for pie, complex, acid/sweet balance. At the end Don told us we had sampled Fameuse (Snow apple), Westfield Seek no Further, and Ribston Pippin - all apples with plenty of flavor.

The wines, made by Don and served with the meal, were Pinot Noir with the pork and Landot Nior served with the chicken. With salads, bread, Sue Runyon's special meatloaf, and Bridget's gooseberry dessert, it was an excellent meal.



Events!

[Great Lakes Expo – December 9th – 11th, Grand Rapids MI](http://glexpo.com)
glexpo.com

Over three days, the program includes sessions on fruit crops, vegetable crops, other specialty crops (chestnuts and hops), greenhouse crop production and marketing, farm marketing ideas and operations, farmers markets and organic production and marketing. There will also be sessions covering a number of general interest topics, including food safety, hoop houses and tunnels, farm labor and the Affordable Care Act. Presentations will be made by researchers and extension educators from Michigan State University and other Land Grant universities and research stations, including speakers from Canada, New Zealand and the Netherlands. There will also be presentations by farm marketers and several grower panels.

[Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference \(ISCAOC\) - January 7-9, 2015, Springfield IL](http://www.specialtygrowers.org/iscaoc-conference.html)
<http://www.specialtygrowers.org/iscaoc-conference.html>

The 2015 Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference and Trade Show will be Jan. 7-9, 2015, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and Convention Center, Springfield, Illinois. ISGA members and all past attendees will be mailed a brochure in late November. The past 2014 agenda with registration is posted below. For more information or to be mailed a 2015 conference brochure, contact: Illinois Specialty Growers Association, 1701 Towanda Ave., Bloomington, IL 61701. Phone 309/557-2107 FAX 309/557-3729 E-mail Cblary@ilfb.org.

[Minnesota Organic Conference - Jan. 9-10, St. Cloud MN](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic/conference.aspx)
<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic/conference.aspx>

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has opened registration for this farmer-focused event and associated trade show being held in St. Cloud. Organizers expect 500-600 people to attend and are offering an early bird discount rate until Dec. 26. Program information, registration forms, and a growing list of trade show vendors are available at the website or by calling 651.201.6012 for a registration brochure.

[Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference & Trade Show -January 15 & 16, 2015, St. Cloud MN](http://www.mfvga.org/)
<http://www.mfvga.org/>

The Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference and Trade Show is held each winter in cooperation with the University of Minnesota Extension Service and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. We have recently enjoyed adding the USDA - Risk Management Agency as one of our partners. Topics at the annual conference include vegetable production, small fruit production, marketing and much more. Each year's program offers a variety of topics designed to be of interest to large and small growers.

[Wisconsin Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Conference - January 25-27, 2015, Wisconsin Dells, WI](http://eventmobi.com/wffvc2015/)
<http://eventmobi.com/wffvc2015/>

[Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota – February 14th, 2015, St. Joseph MN](http://www.sfa-mn.org/)
<http://www.sfa-mn.org/>

MOSES Organic Farming Conference – February 26th – 28th, 2015, La Crosse WI

Take a look at the great lineup of fruit related workshops at the conference! Check out the full schedule at mosesorganic.org.

Organic University (full day course)

Profitable Fruit Processing – Harry and Jackie Hoch

Growing organic fruit for the fresh market in the Upper Midwest is difficult. To make it more economically feasible, you need to make use of low-grade fruit. Processing these fruits into value-added products can help improve your orchard's bottom line. Learn how to avoid the common mistakes that can take the profit out of processing.

Workshops

Managing Fire Blight without Antibiotics - David Granatstein, Washington State University, and Jessica Shade, Organic Center
Learn strategies and practices to control fire blight in apple and pear orchards without the use of antibiotics. Several new control materials are available for use by organic growers, but none appears as a stand-alone replacement for antibiotics. See how organic orchardists in Washington State have used a systems approach successfully to maintain compliance for export to the EU. We'll cover sanitation, vigor control, sequence and timing of control materials, spray coverage, and varietal susceptibility.

Paradise Gardening with Under-Used Fruits - mIEKAL aND, Beyond Vineyard

Take a whimsical and information-packed tour through 20+ years of experimenting with growing under-utilized fruits in the Upper Midwest. These include pawpaw, hardy kiwi, mulberries, cornelian cherries, aronia, seaberry, seedling peaches, heirloom rhubarb, elderberries as well as container culture with figs, citrus, eugenia (aka Surinam cherries) and bananas. Learn about cold-hardy cultivars, propagation, and sources for plants.

Would Stone Fruits be a Good Addition to my Farm? - Jackie and Harry Hoch, Hoch Orchards and Gardens

Stone fruits are challenging in the Upper Midwest. Winter injury, spring frost, pests and fungus can all cause crop failure. While production of organic stone fruits may not be economically feasible here, offering unusual fruits at your farm market has benefits—and some types of stone fruit are surviving in southeastern Minnesota. Learn about the true costs of production so you can make an informed decision before planting stone fruits on your farm.



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Love stone fruit? This guy does!

Midwest School for Beginning Apple Growers - March 13-15th, 2015, Madison WI

This intensive, three-day course gives you a realistic picture of what it takes to run a successful orchard operation—including capital, management, labor and other resources. Topics include soil fertility, pest management, business planning, risk management, recordkeeping, marketing and economics. Grower-instructors primarily teach the course, with featured presentations and hands-on labs by UW faculty and other specialists. Grower-instructors' farms vary in scale, marketing strategies and growing methods. Contact John Hendrickson at (608) 265-3704 or jhendric@wisc.edu for more information.

Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) Annual Convention & Trade Show - April 15th-17th, 2015, Montreal QC.
<http://convention.cpma.ca>

This event is CPMA's keystone event and Canada's largest event dedicated to the fruit and vegetable industry. The event provides a unique forum for industry leaders to enhance their business opportunities in Canada through an exceptional combination of education and networking opportunities. CPMA's Annual Convention and Trade Show attracts over 3000 participants from all segments of the produce supply chain and showcases produce from around the world. <http://convention.cpma.ca> For more information.

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS ! (Deadline December 31st, 2014)

<https://colloque.inra.fr/innohort2015>

French agronomic organizations will hold a ISHS congress dedicated to organic horticulture in June, 2015 in Avignon, France. The congress is called INNOHORT and information is available at this webpage :

<https://colloque.inra.fr/innohort2015>

Different sessions will consider the organic production from the plant to the plant system point of view. One ambition of this symposium is also to examine to what extent gaps can be bridged between scientists from different backgrounds, between researchers and stakeholders, between research and action.

Have a posting or event for listing in the next newsletter? Contact the coordinator at antonptak@gmail.com with the details!

Grower Information

How many acres do you currently have in organic (certified, non-certified or transitional) fruit production?

of bearing acres _____
of non-bearing acres _____



What types of fruit to you grow?

Apples _____ Pears _____
Plums _____ Cherries _____
Ribes _____ Brambles _____
Grapes _____ Blueberries _____
Strawberries _____ Other _____

What marketing strategies do you use?

Direct to public from farm _____
Farmers market _____
U-Pick _____
Wholesale _____
Other _____

Do you offer value-added products?

Sweet cider _____ Dried fruit _____
Hard cider _____ Vinegar _____
Preserves _____
Other _____

What growing practices do you currently use? (check all that apply)

Certified Organic
 Dual operation – both organic and conventional
 Use organic practices but not certified
 In transition to certified organic production
 Low Input Conventional
 Other: _____

Please check if interested in participating in an OFGA committee:

Education _____ Research _____ Advocacy _____

Do you have suggestions for a field day topic and/or location?

Organic Fruit Growers Association
c/o Anton Ptak
N3060 630th St
Menomonie, WI 54751



Organic fruit growers fuel local economies, providing local markets with a delicious, nutritious, variety of fruits without the use of harmful chemicals.

Demand for these high-quality products is on the rise!

Learn how to increase production, integrate organic practices, manage disease and pest problems, find new markets, start your own planting and make both your ecosystem and balance sheets more resilient. Share your knowledge and experiences with others.

Join OFGA today!

OFGA is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to serving the interests of organic fruit growers and advancing the organic fruit industry through

Education

Research

Advocacy



What we do...

EDUCATION

As an OFGA member, you will have the opportunity to learn from experienced fruit growers and agricultural professionals, access current research, find and share resources, and network with other growers through:

Seminars: Intensive full-day courses provide in-depth information on wide range of production and management issues

Field Days: See for yourself how successful plantings throughout the region utilize organic management and engage in on-farm research.

Just Picked - our quarterly newsletter features grower profiles, field reports, event listings, latest research and production-oriented information.

Fact Sheets: Comprehensive concise information on organic production, management and certification issues

OFGA on the Web: We manage a list-serve for our grower members as well as a general list-serve open to everyone. Members, orchardists, hobbyists, and those just beginning to explore fruit production use our web resources to discuss topics, related to production, marketing, and policy. **Learn more on our website:** www.organictreefruit.org

Members receive discounted registration for OFGA sponsored events...



RESEARCH

OFGA helps facilitate connections and collaborations with scientific researchers to address the challenges of managing fruit diseases and pests organically in humid regions of the U.S. Our research initiatives focus on identifying and cataloging:

On-farm fruit production research sites

Fruit-related research programs

Scientists interested in organic research

Specific projects that would benefit from collaborative, multi-state testing

Our members are at the cutting edge of solving disease and pest management in organic fruit production.



ADVOCACY

OFGA members have a professional organization capable of representing their interests in political discussions about the policies and programs that affect small growers such as:

National Organic Program (NOP)

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)

OFGA Membership Form

You don't need to be a grower to join. If you want to learn more about organic tree fruit issues or would simply like to support organic fruit growers, please join OFGA as an Active Non-Grower Member or as an Associate Member.

Active Grower and Active Non-Grower Memberships include full voting rights within the organization. Associate Membership does not include voting rights.

All Membership levels receive a \$10.00 discount at OFGA events.

- Active Grower Member = \$50.00 annual fee, plus \$1.00 per bearing acre
- Active Non-Grower Member = \$50.00 annual fee
- Associate Member = \$25.00 annual fee

Name _____

Farm Name _____

Street Address _____

City/town _____

State _____, Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Be sure to fill out **grower information** on the back of this form, & send with check to:

OFGA
c/o Anton Prak
N3060 630th St
Menomonee, WI 54751

Contact us at info@organictreefruit.org
www.organictreefruit.org

Thank you and welcome!