



The Grapevine

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President's Message

What a difference a year makes! Just a year ago a drought and no fruit at all in my garden. This year a cool spring and only two late frosts. The last frost resulted in the loss of my apricots and a few peaches. Overall the spring has been amazing. This year I have over twenty varieties of apples and 5 pears all in heavy fruit.

I started thinning the fruit. This is something I never really did before to any extent. With so many trees bearing it just does not hurt too much to thin to the king apple. It is great to read the traffic on the web. Everyone is talking thinning fruit and spray regimes.

What I like when I read the comments is that there really is no consensus on best practices. Sure the spray traditional pesticides on a regular basis via the University of Illinois extension service recommended spray regime seem to have a solid following. Then there is a healthy group of go green go natural make it on your own. That's good for the club to have differing thoughts and solutions. If there was only one "best" apple and one "best" spray the world would be a little on the boring side.

Earlier this spring we had two very nice grafting sessions. More varieties than I have seen in recent years. By now we all should know how successful we were with the knife and the rubber bands. Personally 2013 was the year for me to graft pears. The root stock was strong and I had 90%+ takes. Typically summer trims the successes back a bit but I am very happy with my results. How have you done this year?

Hopefully it will lead to new and different garden tours. I hope so.

As always I will ask that you volunteer for the club it is what makes us "sustainable". This year is one of the better years to show off your garden. Even if you have just a few trees or even one that is unique. If you have been successfully growing FIGS. There certainly seems to be interest in the club on learning more.

See you at the picnic! —Tim

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EVENTS

Summer Picnic: Sunday, July 14

The Summer Picnic is a time for MidFexers to come together, feast, talk fruit and go on a tour of the host's orchard. It also serves as our 3rd Quarter business meeting. Please make every effort to attend.

The meal will be served at noon and the club will provide the main entrée, beverage and dinnerware. The side dishes and desserts are pot luck, so it is time for you to show off your cooking and/or baking skills and bring something to share.

Our hosts this year are Patrick and Muriel Driscoll. Patrick and Muriel have lived on 3/4 acre in Prospect Heights for twenty four years. They have a mix of some fifty plus fruit trees packed largely on the back of the property. □ Four apricots, five plums, sixteen apples, six sweet cherries, two sour cherries, ten peaches, three nectarines, three pears, one fig, one persimmon, one black walnut, lots of blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, black and red currants, grapes, gogi berries, gooseberries, and shiitake mushrooms. They have raised bees for fifteen years, and have two outdoor hives (and one indoor hive which swarmed and went away.) We have lots of curculio, codling moths, Japanese beetles, ants, mosquitoes, and a hundreds of other overwhelming pests and infestations. Volunteers should arrive around 10 am to set up. Lunch will be served at noon. The business meeting will start at 1:00.

Patrick notes that all are welcome to bring their pruners: "Who can enter an orchard (even a small one like mine) without a pruner? If you see something that needs pruning, go for it. I will have disinfectant available. "

Also on the agenda for the picnic:

Silent Auction: Bring your surplus gardening related items to the picnic for auction. Examples include fruit trees and nonfruiting plants, along with books and gardening related tools. Then bid on some truly unique items and take home some bargains for your garden. Members often graft more trees than they have room for (for insurance) and donate their surplus successes to the auction. Many also take this opportunity to divide those overly crowded garden plants knowing their donations will go to good homes. Proceeds from the auction benefit the MidFEX treasury.



Date: July 14th, 2013
Setup Time: 10:00 a.m.–12:00 noon
Lunchtime 12:00 noon–2:00 p.m.
Location: 203 E. Olive Avenue
Prospect Heights, IL
60070
Phone: 847-894-5289

DIRECTIONS: *The Driscolls are in Prospect heights generally SW of the intersection of Palatine and Wheeling Road. From that intersection, proceed five blocks south on Wheeling and two blocks west on Olive.*

Budding Demonstration: Get an up-close look of summer budding techniques. Ask questions and get answers from experienced members.

Budwood Exchange: Share budwood of desirable or unusual varieties with other members to try your own hand with summer budding. Look for budwood collection and storage instructions on the next page.

NAFEX Annual Meeting

The 2013 NAFEX Annual Meeting will be held **August 8–11** in the Asheville, NC area. The Conference is at the Highland Lake Cove in Flat Rock. More information is available on the Annual Meeting website:

<http://www.nafex.org/meeting.php>

Budwood Collection Guidelines

The budding demonstration at the MidFEx picnic has fostered an informal budwood exchange between members. Most tree fruit can be successfully budded in summer but budding is particularly useful for propagating stone fruit (plums, apricots, peaches, cherries) that need warmer temperatures to callous and hence are difficult to graft when dormant. Also, if your spring graft failed to take and the rootstock is growing vigorously, summer budding can be a second chance to make a tree this year.

To assure the most viable budwood:

- Collect the most mature wood from this year's growth – at least 3/16th or ¼ inch thick.
- Remove the soft top growth and leaves but leave the petioles (leaf stems).
- Either label each piece or label a ziploc type bag with the variety name.
- Wrap the budwood in a dampened paper towel, seal in the plastic bag, and refrigerate.
- The budwood is fragile and has a short shelf life so collect it as close to the time of distribution as possible and keep it as cool as possible during transport. A small insulated beverage cooler bag with an ice pack works well for an extended period – like the picnic.

Chuck Heisinger has created an excellent video of Al Cosnow's summer budding techniques—including how to collect and prepare budwood. A link to the video is on the "Create Your Own Fruit Trees" page at www.MidFEx.org. The MidFEx forum is a good place to request budwood from other members.

More About My Native Fruits

By Al Cosnow

Well, one of them, anyway. In my last rant I left out one more negative about **pawpaws**. It's the way the trees grow through their lives. There are three stages, and by now my trees and I have been through them all.

STAGE 1: YOU'D THINK THEY WERE PLASTIC. We (my trees and I) started this stage in the late summer of 1986 when I planted 4 potted seedlings; I suppose they were 3 years old. I put them in just the environment that the books recommend: understory shade for the first few years. In my case it was on the property line along my suburban driveway between my overgrown shrubs and the neighbor's overgrown shrubs. They commenced to grow about 4 inches a year for the first 6 years, even after the neighbor and I removed our respective shrubs and the sunlight shone in. I was quite sure I wouldn't live long enough to see them become real trees, let alone produce fruit. Maybe it was the awful clay soil I had them in, maybe it was that I couldn't get water out to them, but whatever the reason, they could as well have been plastic all those years. Except now I don't think it was the bad soil or the lack of water; I think that behavior is par for the course for pawpaws.

STAGE 2: HEY THIS IS GREAT! NOW THEY'RE GROWING AND PRODUCING! Maybe the roots broke through a hardpan, I dunno, but anyway after about 6 years the trees, all 4 of them the same spring, took off and started to grow vigorously and pretty soon really made fruit. Err-rr, lots and lots of fruit, big ones and small ones, way high up in the tree and hard to get to, and ripening all at once, and overripening all at once, and ripening way up there where they hung until they dropped if I missed any. I hope to tell you, those ripe ones from up high sure do make some great ker-splats when they hit the ground. By now I had a new neighbor, and this one didn't like the ker-splats on her manicured lawn. So I found myself with the chore each year for the next 15 or so to prune away the branches that went over the fence onto her property, making sort of an oversized bulging semi-espalier effect onto my side. They were now big trees and shaded the peonies and wildflowers and annuals I wanted to let enjoy some sun there. I was glad one year when the power company came and did some of my hacking-away for me.

STAGE 3: AIN'T THAT CUTE? THEY'RE HAVING BABIES! Maybe they arise from root runners, maybe from seeds of fruits that splatted, probably both. All I know is that little pawpaw trees are coming up all over the area, even in a juniper hedge. They can't be pulled out; you can only cut them off, and you soon see them regrowing. And since at least some of them could be from root runners, using herbicide might kill a mother tree, although at this point maybe that wouldn't be such a bad idea. Anyway, before planting a pawpaw tree, you should consider its weed potential.

Growing Figs in Northeast Illinois

by Bob Walter

If you have never eaten a fresh, ripe fig then you are missing a real treat. Figs are fragrant, moist, sweet, slightly crunchy like a strawberry and have a very delicate flavor. It's hard to imagine that they are even related to leathery dried figs or sticky fig Newtons or sweetly sweet fig jam or even figgy pudding. There are many varieties of figs available online from nurseries with the size, color and sweetness of the fruit being the main distinctions among them. Most varieties require warm winters to survive outdoors unprotected (zone 8 or better), but a few varieties offer some degree of cold-hardiness. Among these varieties, Brown Turkey, Kadota, Hardy Chicago, and dwarf black (Petit Negri) figs are good choices for growing in northern Illinois.

Plant your fig tree in a pot or in the ground with moderately rich soil containing small stones or gravel. Plant in a sunny spot that is protected from the wind, if possible. Trees can be left outside all summer. Water them when soil is dry. Figs will tolerate a fair amount of drying but keep them well watered when temperatures rise into the 80s and 90s. If leaves are drooping, make sure to water them. Fertilize in spring and in mid-summer with a slow release fertilizer like Osmocote (8-8-8 or 10-10-10) or composted manure. Don't be too concerned about repotting into ever larger pots. Repot every 2 or 3 years. Trees will bear more fruit if they are potbound. Also be aware that the branches and the outer layer of the fruits contain latex and the fruits will often drip some latex after being picked. Latex can be a skin irritant for some people.

Probably because of the latex, there are few insect or animal problems with figs. Sweet-loving brown ants may attack ripening figs. Ant problems can be solved easily by putting ant stakes like Spectracide ant shield stakes into the ground near the base of each tree. These stakes attract and kill the little brown ants that go after your figs but won't release the insecticide into the soil where it could be taken up by your tree. Also, whenever you see a fig that is being eaten by ants, pluck it off and discard it ASAP to discourage attracting more ants. Deer will not touch the trees or the fruit. Squirrels and chipmunks (ground squirrels) may steal a few of the ripening fruits. Shouting at them and waving your hands will make you feel better about this. There is no need to spray trees for insects at any time. Neither whiteflies, aphids, caterpillars, Japanese beetles, nor any other flies or beetles will bother figs. The most common pathogen for fig trees is root knot nematode and unfortunately this condition cannot usually be cured. However, even if nematodes are present, the tree will live and fruit, although with somewhat less vigor than it would in the absence of nematodes.

Fruiting

Only a few fig varieties need to be pollinated in order to set fruit. Indeed, many varieties of figs that require pollination and are pollinated become filled with large seeds as they mature and become inedible. The vast majority of varieties are parthenocarpic and do not require pollination. Most trees will begin to fruit in 2 years or so and will bear progressively more fruit as they mature. Eventually you may even need to thin the fruit in mid-summer if the tree sets too much. As with other types of fruiting trees, too much fruit set will result in small fruits that may not mature fully. In many fig varieties, some fruit may ripen in mid-summer (the so-called breba crop), but in northern Illinois figs may never produce a breba crop. But be patient, the fruit will just ripen later in the summer. In late August continuing through October, the main crop of figs will ripen and you can pick figs throughout this period as they become ripe. Figs should be picked when they are fully colored, soft, and droopy on their stems. Green fruits will not ripen off the plant, so don't pick them green. Peel the thin skin from fruit if you do not like the flavor of the residual latex in the skin or just eat them skin and all. Eat the figs within a few days of picking because they will spoil or lose flavor quickly even in the refrigerator.

Overwintering

In zone 5 (Chicago area) or lower, the exposed parts of fig trees will not survive the winter. If left exposed, all above-ground wood will die back to the ground and the tree will resprout from the roots in the Spring. Although the tree will survive and will go on to form fruit, the figs will probably not ripen before the end of the growing season. As a result, it is much better to protect the trees from the cold at the end of the growing season. To this end, many methods have been devised to overwinter figs.

Hardy Kadota Figs
Yellow-green skin, amber to red flesh
Yellow



For trees growing in pots, leave them outside in Autumn until all of the leaves fall off. Trees will survive mild to moderate frosts and freezes, but should not be left outside unprotected if temperatures drop below 15°F. After the leaves have fallen and trees are dormant, move the plants into an unheated garage or other area where temperatures will not drop below 20°F and will not rise above 50°F or so for the duration of winter. Do not overwinter inside a heated house, as this will usually prevent figs from fruiting the next season. I usually enclose the pots in large black trash bags to help hold moisture and to keep the dirt off the garage floor. I also raise the bagged pots off the floor of my unheated, attached garage by putting them onto blocks of styrofoam like the packing material from boxed computers and other electronics (reduce, reuse, recycle). Water the plants periodically (2 or 3 times) during winter storage. Just keep the soil a little damp, not soaked.

In the Spring when the weather warms up, the trees may start to leaf out while still in your garage. This is neither here nor there and does no harm. Wait to put them outside until most risk of hard frost has passed, usually in April sometime. Even if they are outside when a late snow arrives, they should be fine. Don't worry so much.

As an alternative to bringing your potted trees into an unheated area for the winter, you can leave them in the ground and try to insulate them from the extremes of winter temperatures. Many methods have been used successfully to do this. Often people bundle the branches together and wrap the whole plant in burlap or blankets or some other insulating material and leave it sitting upright in the ground over the winter. Others grow the plants near a building or house, pull the plants against a heated or unheated exterior wall of the house in Autumn, and wrap them with plastic to create an enclosure that captures and holds some of the heat escaping from the house. My preferred method is to pull all of the branches and the main trunk down to the ground (they are extremely flexible), tie them together, stake them down near the ground, cover with a foot or two of leaf mulch, and then cover that with a tarp. It's also a good idea to put a few mouse bait-blocks under the tarp to prevent this from becoming a rodent winter spa with an all-you-can-eat fig tree bark buffet. This method works quite well for me. Usually only a few small branches show winter-kill, the plants fruit heavily the next year, and there is a lot of great fruit to eat and to give away all through the late summer.



Above: Chicago Hardy, Brown Figs. Dark brown skin, pink to red flesh. Below: Figs overwintered outdoors in ground, tied upright in spring. Leaf mulch still lying around base.

Figs during late July (5-foot stepladder)



Does Summer Pruning Benefit Apple and Peach Trees?

By Mosbah Kushad (kushad@illinois.edu)

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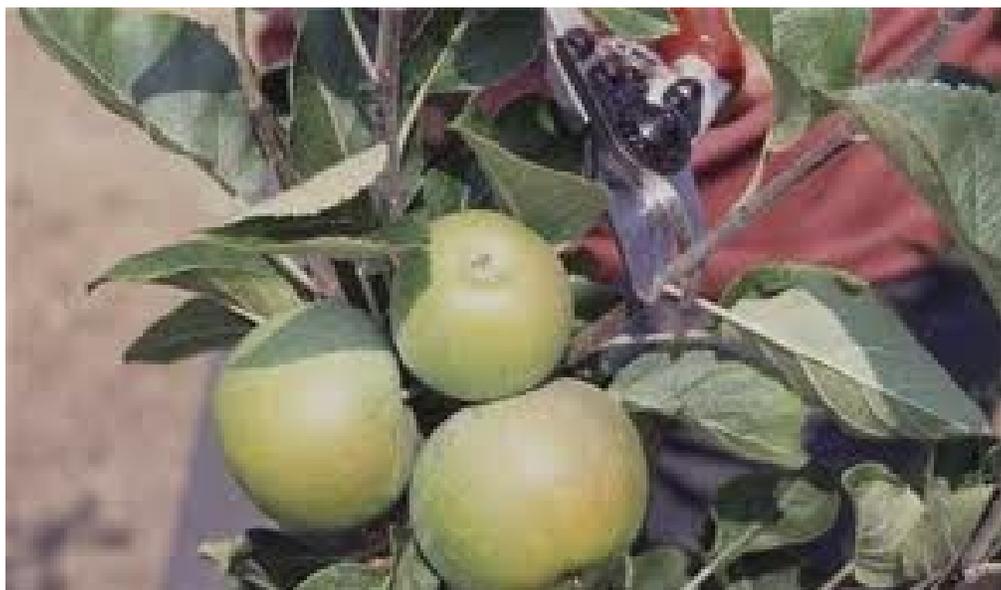
For more than a century pomologists have been evaluating summer pruning, but there is no consistent agreement about its benefits. Some experiments have reported that summer pruning reduced tree vigor, increased flower bud initiation, and improved fruit color, while others showed it had minimal or opposite effects. Some of the discrepancies in results relate to when and how summer pruning was done. Several reviews were published on the subject in the mid 1980s, but very little have been published since then. Here are a few suggestions about summer pruning.

There is a general agreement that removal of shading branches by winter and summer pruning increases light penetration into the canopy. It is also known that an adequate amount of light reaching fruiting wood is critical for new flower buds formation. By increasing the amount of light in the canopy, early summer pruning of peaches and apples has been suggested to increase flower bud initiation in the following year and maintain fruiting wood, but the results are not consistent. Because of this, my suggestion to those that wish to summer prune their trees, especially peaches, is to remove only vigorous upright shoots (water-sprouts) in the middle of the canopy and some of the non-fruiting shoots that are causing shading. It is better to pull them out by hand or thin them out, because there will be very little re-growth in the same area. Also, do not prune the trees very severely because it can reduce the reserve carbohydrates in the tree which can impact fruit size and sugars. It can also increase the trees' susceptibility to early winter injury and formation of nonproductive lateral branches.

Timing of summer pruning is also important. Very early summer pruning will affect the vegetative growth while very late summer pruning will add little benefit to the trees or the fruits and in worst situations it may reduce winter hardiness. The preferred time for summer pruning is about 40 to 50 days after bloom for peaches and 50 to 60 days after bloom for apples. The idea is to get rid of a few vigorous upright shoots in order to increase light penetration into the canopy, but it is not a replacement for dormant pruning.

In general, a well pruned and trained apple or peach tree with good light distribution in the canopy will not gain much benefit from summer pruning, so spending too much time on it is not economical.

<http://ipm.illinois.edu/ifvn/contents.php>



Your membership may be expiring! **Check your Grapevine address label for your membership expiration date. If it says "6/30/13" or earlier, then it is time to renew.**

MidFEx Membership Application

New Member Renewing Member

Name (please print)			
Address	City	State	Zip
Telephone	E-Mail		

Amount Enclosed: \$15 (1 Year) \$25 (2 Years) \$30 (3 Years)

Mail to: MidFEx Membership
P.O. Box 93
Markham, IL 60428-0093

The above information (name, address and phone only) will appear in our Members' Only Directory (June issue) and is never sold or rented to outside interests.

RECIPE

Blueberry Salsa

Submitted by Dorothy (Jim) Ozzello

Ingredients

PREP 15 mins

Original recipe makes 3 cups

- 2 cups chopped fresh blueberries
- 1 cup whole fresh blueberries
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped jalapeno pepper
- 1/3 cup chopped red onion
- 1/4 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 1 fresh lime, juiced
- salt to taste

Directions

In a bowl, combine chopped and whole blueberries, jalapeño pepper, onion, red pepper, lime juice, and salt.



MidFEx Calendar 2013–2014	
July 14, 2013	Summer Picnic: Patrick Driscoll 203 E. Olive Ave. Prospect Heights, IL
August 18 th , 2013	Summer Pruning Workshop: Tim Hamilton, 36500 N Field View, Gurnee, IL 1PM
Oct 19, 20 th 2013	Fall Harvest Festival at Chicago Botanic Gardens, Glencoe (18 th set up)
November 3, 2013	Apple Cider Social: Allen Cosnow, Glencoe, IL
April 7, 2014	Grafting Workshop: Cantigny Gardens, Wheaton, IL
April 14, 2014	Grafting Workshop: Chicago Botanical Garden, Glencoe, IL
October 18 th 19 th 2014	Fall Harvest Festival at Chicago Botanic Gardens, Glencoe (17 th set up)
2013 MidFEx Officers and Contacts	
President: Tim Hamilton • Secretary: Bill Scheffler Vice-President: Craig Evankoe • Treasurer: Jeff Postlewaite	Membership: Use enclosed application, see website, email membership@midfex.org Or write: MidFEx Membership, P.O. Box 93, Markham, IL 60428-0093
Grapevine articles wanted! Deadline for articles to Robin Guy for next issue: August 12, 2013. Please e-mail articles to Robin and type "GRAPEVINE" in the header. Gathering editor: Robin Guy (editor@midfex.org) Layout editors: Angela Bowman and Vanessa Smith	MidFEx Online Forum: Members are invited to join the MidFEx forum. Get advice and share your fruit growing experiences with other members. Subscribe to the forum at: http://lists.ibiblio.org/mailman/listinfo/midfex Forum Administrator: Sherwin Dubren (sherwindu@att.net)
Orchard Guide: Local on-line fruit growing resource developed by a MidFEx member. You enter in the varieties of fruit trees that you are growing. The site estimates when pests will appear based on local weather reports so you can exercise spraying or integrated pest management (IPM) more efficiently. Post feedback on your growing experiences with specific varieties, and read feedback from others about which varieties do well here and which struggle. http://orchardguide.net	MidFEx Web Site: http://www.midfex.org Send anything of interest (links, photographs, fruit info, etc.) to webadmin@midfex.org for consideration for web site posting. Member Area first time login: username is your last name (exactly as on your address label) plus a '-' plus your 5 character zip code. Example "Doe-60010". password is your username as described above plus a '-' plus your membership expiration date expressed as 6 numeric characters. Example "Doe-60010-063012"