

President's Message By: Phil Hahn

It's been a cool wet spring in this part of the world, dryer toward Wisconsin, wetter toward Kankakee and much wetter farther south. Dennis Norton (MidFEx February lecture @ CBG) of Royal Oak Farms in Harvard reports no evening temperatures above 50 degrees yet this season. His 800 peach trees came through the winter with plenty of flower buds but none had opened as of May 20. If his peaches do set a crop this year they'll be much later than the normal early August. It'll be interesting to compare northerly and southerly bloom dates.

2008 Grafting Workshops

This year's workshops went extremely well. The smaller capacity Cantigny workshop was not so overcrowded as past years, while the Botanic Garden date drew record numbers in an ample space. Much thanks to the regulars who make all this happen year after year and never let us down. We're asking members to keep a mental or scratch record of the percentage of successful grafting "takes." We'll present this volunteered info in a later issue. Also, in keeping with the spirit of Fruit Explorers, we'd like to collect descriptions of your grafting experiments and less-than-orthodox procedures (or mistakes) that you feel improved (or decreased) your graft unions.

Home Orchard Tour - Sunday, June 22

Many of our members have exceptional orchards and gardens worthy of admiration and in need of periodic visits. Al Cosnow (Glencoe) and Gene Yale (Skokie) have always been willing to open their truly inspirational urban orchards at the drop of a trowel. If you've not been to one or the other, this is your chance to see both on the same day. These will be one-hour tours rather than "open houses", so please arrive on time and depart en masse (thank you). Close-by parking may be a problem, so consider pooling or allow time for a parking search. Al Cosnow 1:00 PM – Gene Yale 2:30 PM. Addresses and directions on Page 9.

Summer Picnic – Saturday, July 19

Our 2008 Summer picnic will be at Norton's Royal Oak Farm on Saturday, July 19th. While a Saturday MidFEx picnic is a change from our normal Sunday dates, it works best for the Norton's and is certain to be a memorable day. After lunch and a brief meeting we'll be taken on an orchard tour courtesy of Dennis.

Royal Oak Farm is a family operation with extensive facilities to serve groups and visitors of all ages. We'll be using their well equipped screened pavilion, meaning we won't need to do any set-up. If our string of perfect picnic weather does not hold – no matter – we're covered. Our pot-luck picnic will begin promptly at 1:00 PM, so plan to arrive by 12:30 or so to lay out your food dishes. Check your travel distance ahead of time so you won't be late – Royal Oak is just this side of the Wisconsin border. As usual, MidFEx will provide

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President's Message (Cont.)

tableware, ice, beverages and an entrée. For you more energetic foodies, consider bringing a side dish in addition to your salad or dessert. Naturally, anything brought from your home garden is particularly appreciated.

We'll set up another silent auction at the picnic, so scout your collection for plant materials, tools, supplies, books, etc. that may be of interest to other dirt lovers. We expect to have some grafted fruit trees in pots for sale, created from the workshop leftovers. See the map and directions to Royal Oak inside.

Hope you can make it,

Phil

Sustainable Agriculture Tours

The University of Illinois Extension has tours that highlight sustainable agriculture operations around the state of Illinois. One tour is August 8, University of Illinois Dixon Springs Agricultural Center, Dixon Springs (www.cropsci.uiuc.edu/research/rdc/dixonsprings) and is co-sponsored by the Upper Midwest Organic Tree Fruit Growers Network (www.mosesorganic.org/treefruit/).

Tours cost \$20 per person and includes lunch. Registration at least one week in advance is required. Visit www.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/ to register and for more details about each of the tours, including a map and agenda. To register by phone, contact Donna Cray at 217-241-4644. For more information, contact Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant (217-968-5512; cvnghgrn@uiuc.edu).

Silent Auction at the Picnic... Need Items

By Brad Platt

We will again have a Silent Auction at this year's picnic. It will add to the fun, with all the sales revenue from your donated items going to the club.

We need your help and donations. Please bring your gardening related items to the picnic. Examples include fruit trees and non-fruiting plants, along with books and gardening-related tools. Please make sure that plants in containers are well rooted. So, if you grafted 4 trees and they all took, but only have room for 2, please donate your extras. They will find good homes, and the money will help our treasury.

MidFEx Picnic - Saturday 7/19/08

MidFEx Picnic will be held on **Saturday 7/19/08** in Harvard, IL. The picnic will be held at Norton's Royal Oak Farm (<http://www.royaloakfarmorchard.com/>), 15908 Hebron Road, Harvard, IL 60033; 815.648.4141

There is no tent set up this year, as we will be under a screened in pavilion. No worries about the weather or insects! There will be a lot of time to relax with fellow MidFExers. The lunch will start promptly at 1:00. Please contact Phil Hahn (708-333-2679) with any questions.

Please bring potluck dishes, salads or desserts. MidFEx will supply the main course and drinks.

Directions to Royal Oak Farm

Take I-90 Northwest to Rt 47 North at the Huntley exit. Follow Rt 47 North through Woodstock to Hebron. **Or...**

Take I-94 North to Rt 173. Head West through Antioch to Hebron. **Or...**

Take Rt 14 North past Woodstock to Rt 47. Follow Rt 47 North to Hebron. **Or...**

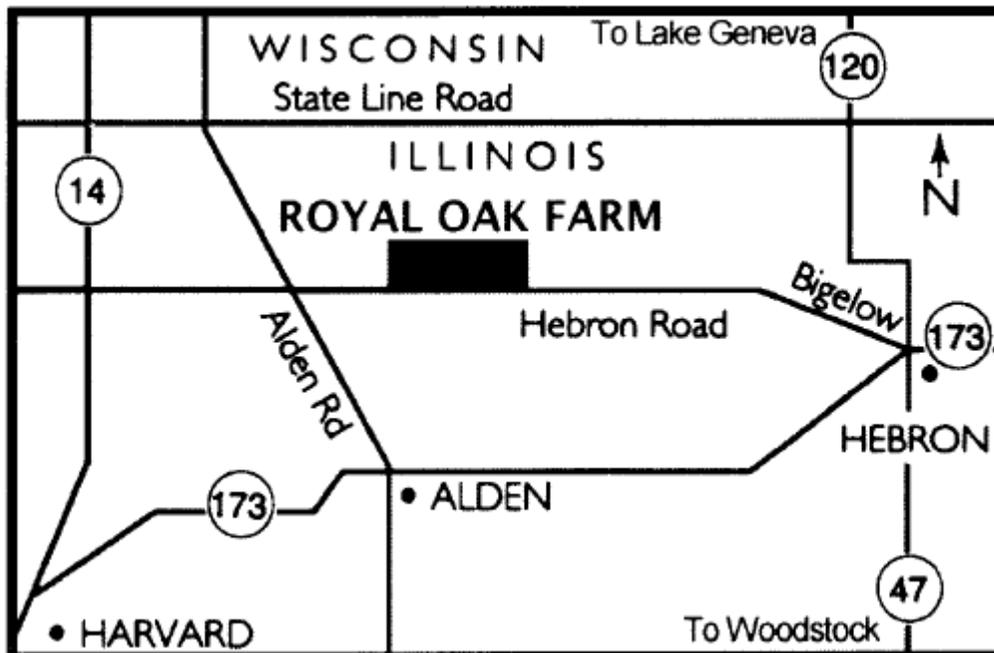
Take Rt 12 North to Richmond. Take Rt 173 West to Hebron.

THEN

In Hebron take Rt 47 North and then left onto Bigelow (which becomes Hebron Rd). The orchard will be 4 miles out on the north side of the road. Can't miss it.

Or From Wisconsin:

From Lake Geneva, WI - take Wisconsin Rt 120 South to Illinois (Rt 47). In Hebron, take a right onto Bigelow (turns into Hebron Rd). The orchard will be 4 miles on your right. **Or...**
From Walworth, WI - take Rt 14 South to Hebron Rd on the left. The orchard will be 4 miles on your Left.



Home Orchard Tours- Sunday, June 22

On Sunday, June 22nd, please join your fellow MidFEx members for our annual home orchard tour.

Al Cosnow's home orchard will be our first stop. Al's address is 670 Longwood Ave. Glencoe, IL 60022, and the tour will start promptly at 1:00 PM. After the tour at Al's, head south to Gene Yale's home orchard for a 2:30 tour. Gene's address is 9121 N. Keeler Ave. Skokie, IL 60076.

Please note that these are one-hour tours; not "open houses", so please arrive on time and depart en mass (thank you). Close-by parking may be a problem, so consider pooling or allow time for a parking search. Directions are on Page 9.

2008 NAFEX ANNUAL MEETING

The 2008 NAFEX meeting will take place July 24-26, 2008, at the NC Cooperative Extension, Pasquotank Center at 1209 McPherson Street, Elizabeth City, NC 27909. The meeting host is Tom Campbell, a long-time agricultural extension agent at the site.

There will be a pre-meeting tour on Wednesday August 22nd, to the Musser Fruit Research Center.

The discussions include: David Vernon of Century Orchards, his subject heirloom apples. We'll have a presentation on kiwi fruit production. Ethan Natelson speaks on pears, another subject grafting and budding fruit.

Tours include: raised bed fruit culture for physically impaired gardeners; olive, fig, grapes, an apple planting, plum, and mixed brambles wholesale packing operation, and a muscadine grape winery, the Clay Foreman Arboretum, Knott's Island (a very interesting location and will surprise you with what can be grown on what essentially is a giant sand bar), Austin's Peach Orchard and Basket Shop, Floyd Watkins ½ acre 60 vine commercial kiwi fruit vineyard, Martins' 20 acre Orchard and Winery which is a pick your own and wine tasting operation, and Moonrise Bay Vineyard, Winery, and Tasting Room.

The registration fee is \$60 per adult which includes Thursday and Friday, Friday and Saturday lunches and the educational program. Registration will be available on site and can be adjusted for those not attending all of the events. We look forward to seeing you there, Thursday, July 24 thru Saturday, July 26, 2008. For those flying in, Elizabeth City is about 45 miles due South of Norfolk, Virginia and the Norfolk International Airport (ORF). Raleigh/Durham Airport (RDU) is about 3.5 hours drive West Southwest of Elizabeth City.

For more meeting information including registration, speakers and additional tours, check out: <http://nafex.org/meeting.htm>

Home Orchard Weed Control

By Paul Vossen, UC Davis Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor

This is taken with permission from the author from:
<http://homeorchard.ucdavis.edu/weed-control.pdf>

As I visit home orchardist's back yard trees one of the most frequent problems I see is excessive weed competition. I see many trees that do not have adequate weed control to a point where the weeds have hindered the growth of the young trees. We have extensive data that shows how weed competition reduces the growth of fruit trees, especially in the first few years up to full size and the beginning of fruit bearing. Remember that in the first few years of the tree's growth you are just growing branches and leaves. The faster the trees fill their allotted space the quicker they will provide fruit. Tree growth rate depends on climate, irrigation, fertility, and weed control.

In one study comparing different weed control methods on fruit tree growth, the trees with the best weed control grew more, a lot more. The trial compared mulched trees (wood chips), herbicide treated area below trees (bare ground), cultivation below trees, annual clover growing right up to the base of the trees, and annual grasses growing up to the base of the trees. The most growth occurred with the mulched trees followed by the herbicide treated trees and thirdly by the cultivated trees, but all had similar growth rates. The trees, however, with clover weeds grew about one-half the rate of the mulched trees and the trees with the grassy weeds grew about one-fourth the rate of the trees with good weed control.

Tree growth in this experiment was measured in both shoot length and trunk diameters and the moisture content of the soils was maintained evenly. Translating the growth rates of this experiment over to a poorly weeded back yard fruit tree means that it may take 2-4 more years to get full sized trees instead of what would be considered normal. Weed competition that reduces shoot growth in bearing trees can also reduce fruit production as well as fruit size. In other words weed control is very important.

Weeds compete with trees in several ways - primarily through competition for moisture, but also for nutrients, and for physical space in the soil. One of the best ways to stunt young fruit trees is to allow a grass cover crop to dry the soil out around the trees in the spring of the year. Many home orchardists have good intentions of removing the winter weeds in the spring, but get to it too late. New growth in trees can begin as early as April, but root growth starts sooner. I therefore recommend that no weed competition be allowed within three feet of the tree trunks - ever.

There are 4 main ways to accomplish this:

1. **Organic Mulches:** This is the best option. I recommend using at least 3 to 4 inches of fresh wood chips spread in an area surrounding the tree in a six-foot diameter circle. In many cases chips can be purchased locally from counties and municipalities trying to reduce landfill inputs. Organic mulch is really the ultimate in weed control because as it breaks down slowly, it creates a loose tilth to the soil, and it releases

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Home Orchard Weed Control (Cont.)

nutrients. Water absorption and retention is also aided. It can be expensive and labor intensive to spread, but well worth it.

2. Fabric Mulches: One product that I have tested, called Lumite 994G6, is a black weed control fabric that allows water to pass through, but no weeds grow through it. You probably have seen it at container nurseries where they use it in their growing grounds to control weeds. In my trials it has lasted ten years, the manufacturer guarantees it for five. This method effectively controls the weed headache for many years at a minimal cost. There are several other products on the market that are paper or plastic based materials with varying costs and longevity. Some people, however, don't like how the fabric mulches look. Covering them with organic mulch defeats the purpose since weeds will then germinate in the mulch.

3. Cultivation: The old method of hand hoeing or digging around trees with small motorized tilling devices works as well as it ever did. The success of cultivation is directly proportional to the frequency at which it is done. Most home fruit tree growers do not do it well enough or frequently enough to completely eliminate tree stress. It is the least expensive method, but requires more labor and constant attention. Cultivation needs to occur when the soil is moist prior to the weeds stealing all the water away from the fruit tree. Sprinkler irrigations about every 2-3 weeks will also require weeding about every 2-3 weeks. Daily drip irrigation or irrigating twice per week with mini-sprinklers requires weeding about every 2-3 weeks also since it is much easier to kill the weeds before they get too big and stress the trees.

4. Flamers: Propane powered weed burning torches can be used in home orchards for weed control. These devices consist of a hand held wand about three feet long attached by a hose to a small propane tank. Most propane weed burners shoot out a flame about six inches long and 3-4 inches in diameter. They are used to "cook" the young weeds within 3' of the tree. The heat sometimes injure young trees and only very small weeds are easily controlled. Many grasses with their low growing point are much harder to kill with the flamer. Care must also be taken not to start a wild fire or to melt drip irrigation tubing.

One thing for sure is that you will always have weeds, so be prepared to deal with them right from the start.

MidFEx Newsflash By Chris Andersen

MidFEx was contacted recently by Rosalind Creasy. In 1982 she wrote a book called *The Complete Book of Edible Landscaping*. She was recently asked by the Sierra Club to rewrite it and during her research found the MidFEx website. She wanted to use one of our pictures and include mention of MidFEx in her new revised edition. The photo has been delivered and MidFEx will be mentioned! This will be a high quality, hardbound, Sierra Club publication and will be released in 2010. More details as they develop.

Directions to Orchard Tours

Al Cosnow's home orchard will be our first stop. Al's address is 670 Longwood Ave. Glencoe, IL 60022, and the tour will start promptly at 1:00 PM. After the tour at Al's, head south to Gene Yale's home orchard for a 2:30 tour. Gene's address is 9121 N. Keeler Ave. Skokie, IL 60076. See the President's Message for more details.

Directions to Al Cosnow's house

- 1. From Either Direction on Sheridan Road:** Turn east on Hazel (the street south of Park). The third and last house on the North side of Hazel, before the city park, is Cosnow's. Look for the brick and iron fence.
- 2. Northbound on Edens Expwy (I-94):** Exit Willow Road East. Go east 0.6 miles to FORESTWAY. Go left (North) on Forestway for 1.2 miles to TOWER. Go right (East again) on Tower for 0.6 miles to VERNON. Go left (North again) for 1.2 miles to HAZEL. Go right (East again) on Hazel about 0.3 miles, crossing over Sheridan Rd. Continue to follow the directions in paragraph 1 above.
- 3. Northbound on I-294:** Exit Willow Road East, and keep on truckin' through several 'burbs until you get to I-94, which is the border of Northbrook and Glencoe. Cross over I-94, stay on Willow Road, and follow the directions in second paragraph above.
- 4. Southbound on 94/294:** Exit WAUKEGAN ROAD (Rte. 43) South. Go south to DUNDEE ROAD (Rte. 68) East. Go Left (East) on Dundee Rd.; it becomes winding and residential, but don't worry. Keep your wits about you here---the block before Dundee Rd. ends at Green Bay Road is VERNON. Go right (South) on Vernon to HAZEL. Go left (East) on Hazel and follow the directions in first paragraph above.
- 5. Southbound on Rte. 41:** Exit LAKE-COOK ROAD East. Go to GREEN BAY ROAD. Go right (South) on Green Bay Road to PARK STREET. Go left (East again) on Park Street, cross over SHERICAN ROAD, then one more block East to LONGWOOD. Go right (South again) for one block to HAZEL STREET. Cosnow's house is on the NW corner of Longwood and Hazel, entrance around the corner on Hazel.

Cosnow's mailing address is 670 Longwood, but that is just a little gate. Just remember that the house is on the NW corner Longwood and Hazel, with the actual driveway entrance around the corner on Hazel. Al's Home phone: (847) 835-5278; Al's cell phone: (847) 345-6743.

From Al Cosnow's house to Gene Yale's house

Start out going NORTH on LONGWOOD AVE toward PARK AVE. Turn LEFT onto PARK AVE. Turn RIGHT onto GREEN BAY RD. Turn LEFT onto DUNDEE RD. Merge onto I-94 E/EDENS EXPY E/US-41 S toward CHICAGO. Take the OLD ORCHARD ROAD exit and TURN LEFT (EAST). Turn RIGHT onto US-41/SKOKIE RD. Continue to follow US-41. Turn LEFT onto CHURCH ST. Turn RIGHT onto KEELER AVE. End at 9121 Keeler Ave Skokie, IL 60076-1605

Your membership may be expiring! Check your Grapevine address label for your membership expiration date. If it says "6/30/2008" or earlier, then it is time to renew. Mail the form below.

-----cut here-----

MidFEx Membership Renewal

Mr. or Ms. _____

Name (please print)

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Telephone _____

E-Mail _____

Date _____

Amount Enclosed: \$10 (1 Year) \$20 (2 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.

Mark your Calendar 2008 Dates to Remember. See inside for more details. (Volunteers needed for all events!)	
June 22 (Sun)	Orchard tours at Al Cosnow's and Gene Yale's homes
July 19 (Sat)	Summer picnic. Site: Royal Oak Farm Orchard , 10:00 set-up, 11:00 lecture/picnic
September 2008	Next Grapevine
October 18-19, Sat/Sun	Fall Harvest Festival 2008 at Chicago Botanic Garden
MidFEx Officers and Contacts 2008-09	
President: Phil Hahn Secretary: Chuck Heisinger	Vice-President: Tim Hamilton Treasurer: Jeff Postlewaite
Communications: Sherwin Dubren	Membership Chair: Jeff Postlewaite
Editor: Robin Guy (rguy@ameritech.net)	MidFEx Web Site: http://www.midfex.org
Additional Contributors (Editor: thank you all!): Phil Hahn, Chuck Heisinger, Brad Platt, Jeff Postlewaite, Paul Vossen.	Send anything of interest to Brad Platt for consideration for the web site; call Brad or e-mail at midfexweb@buildabettersite.com
Grapevine articles wanted! Deadline for articles to Robin Guy for next Grapevine: 8/12/08. Please e-mail articles to Robin's address above; in the subject, mention "Grapevine".	For membership information, see website or write: Jeff Postlewaite MidFEx Membership P.O. Box 93 Markham, IL 60428-0093

<p>Grapevine Midwest Fruit Explorers P.O. Box 93, Markham, IL 60426-0093</p> <p style="text-align: right;">First Class</p>
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