

President's Message by: Phil Hahn

The MidFEx Summer Picnic of 2002 was as perfect as a picnic could be. The weather, the company and the location were as delicious as the food. More than 50 members were able to enjoy this best-of-summer event. Thank you to Susan and David Differding who will be orchestrating next year's picnic. Several new members attended and willingly took on club responsibilities.

A very big Thank you to Al Cosnow for hosting the picnic and providing the Colorado weather (again). If ever you need perfect weather at an outdoor event... invite Al. He's 4 for 4 for MidFEx.

Fall Festival: Our major public event of the year is on track for October 19 and 20 at the Chicago Botanic Garden. The plan for this year was to expand our efforts and take part in Chicago Botanic Garden's outdoor festival on the same dates. In addition to our normal indoor fruit display and sales, we were to have an outdoor tent for fruit sales. However, on August 12th we were notified that the Botanic Garden had been forced to cancel their two-week fall festival for budgetary reasons and will not have a "flea market" type affair with outside vendors. In its place they will have a scaled down event, Pumpkin Mania, which will be a pumpkin sale with outdoor family activities. Unfortunate for those of us looking forward to the outdoor component, but certainly fewer complications for MidFEx.

Therefore, our MidFEx Fall Festival will have the same scope as in past years with the fruit display and sales taking place in the all-purpose room of the education building. Jim Lipka and Rod Beary are the organizers and will still have their hands full with fruit selection/ordering and directing volunteers. Those who signed up for working the fall festival will be contacted in September.

In the June Grapevine I spoke of poor blossoming and fruit set on apples and pears in my own yard. Looks like I'm not alone, as others have reported the same. One bright spot here is the blackberry patch. An abundant fruit set with 12 pounds harvested so far. The half of the crop still on the canes is not plumping up as well as the early part, but better than average year productivity wise.

Looking forward to hearing members' harvest results from throughout the region. See you at the fall festival!

Phil

Volunteers Needed for the Harvest Festival

By Jim Lipka and Rod Beary

The MidFEx Harvest Festival is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday 19-20 October 2002 from 10 AM to 4 PM in the Multipurpose Room of the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe, IL. Volunteers are needed for the following times and days:

Friday, 18 October

4 PM to 7 PM ? Setup and Labeling of fruit

Saturday, 19 October

9 AM to 1:30 PM

1 PM to 5:30 PM

Sunday, 20 October

9 AM to 1:30 PM

1 PM to 5:30 PM

5 PM to 7 PM ? Take Down and Cleanup

Please contact Jim Lipka at (847) 223-8052 (h), (847) 938-4825 (w) or Rod Beary at (630) 554-7150x1 (email: rbeary2327@aol.com) to sign up to volunteer. Volunteers are need for all time slots. Jim and Rod will be happy to entertain any questions or comments you may have about the festival. Many members have already signed up at the MidFEx Summer picnic, and Rod and Jim extend their thanks to these folks.

The MidFEx was expecting to be in two locations this fall; the Multipurpose Room and "Tent Row" at the Botanic Garden's Fall Festival Country Market. We were looking forward to this exciting new opportunity, both to increase public awareness and to provide additional sales. The Botanic Gardens has cancelled the Fall Festival Country Market for 2002, so MidFEx will be in the Multipurpose Room only, as in previous years (Ed. Note: See Page 3 for more information on the Harvest Fest).

For those of you not lucky enough to have slogged through last year's downpour, this will be a chance to experience and demonstrate the new MidFEx apple cider press, in operation for the second year. We welcome the usual fruit, nut and berry displays (you MidFExers know who you are). Avoid the crowds of your fellow MidFEx members who will be interested in trying out the new cider press; volunteer early to reserve a spot in line for this fun-packed event!

I am in the process of compiling an article with information from members about pest control. Organic or not? Concentration and timing of application? Where do you purchase your supplies? I will publish all replies in the next Grapevine. Please get back to Robin Guy (deadline and e-mail on last page) with your information.

Fruit and/or Nuts Needed for Harvest Festival by Jim Lipka and Rod Beary

Members are encouraged to bring apples, pears or any other fruits, nuts or berries that can be grown in the MidFEx members area. These products will be displayed during the festival, and may be sampled on Sunday afternoon. Please look around now to see what fruits and nuts you may have at the time of the festival. We encourage you to consider unusual varieties that you think may not be familiar to other members or the public. Refrigeration before the festival may prolong the freshness of your produce.

Members are requested to bring clean, labeled fruit, berries and/or nuts to the Chicago Botanic Garden Multipurpose room between 4 PM to 7 PM on Friday 18 October during the setup and labeling session. MidFEx wants to highlight fruit and nuts that are grown in the membership area. We will be happy to have you stay to help with the setup and enjoy the organized chaos.

Please include your name and the town/county where the produce was grown. You may want to include the source of the tree if the variety is particularly difficult to source. This information will allow a visitor to make direct contact with the MidFEx member who grew the fruit, and will make any follow-up questions other members or the public may have to be answered. We look forward to seeing the wide range and diversity of our members' orchards.

2002 Fall Harvest Festival – October 19-20 By: Phil Hahn

The Fall Festival is our big event of the year and is held at the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe, IL. At the Fall Festival we display to the public the fruits (literally) of our efforts and demonstrate the possibilities of everyman's backyard. We typically have well over 100 varieties of apples and pears, as well as several varieties of other fall fruits, all grown by MidFEx members. The other fruits and nuts grown in the Chicago area and displayed include apricots, quince, persimmon, pawpaw, figs, Cornelian cherry, walnuts, pecans, hazelnuts and fall berries. We demonstrate an apple cider press in operation and serve cider samples. The Fall Festival is our only fundraiser of the year and a major portion of the festival preparation involves acquiring and handling a modest selection of high quality commercially grown apples. Our apple grower also produces fresh cider, which we sell by the half-gallon and gallon. We sometimes sell other fruit related items including fruit butters, preserves, books and tools.

This year's Fall Festival was to have included an outdoor sales tent in addition to our normal indoor fruit display and sales. The Botanic Garden had planned to have a Fall Festival Country Market with numerous vendors and activities on two weekends in October. We would have participated as the apple and cider vendor for the weekend of Oct. 19-20, maintaining both indoor and outdoor sales

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2002 Fall Harvest Festival – October 19-20 (Continued)
by: Phil Hahn

locations. Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately for this year), the Garden has been forced to cancel their Country Market for budget and staffing reasons. They have chosen to focus their attention on the grand re-opening of their expanded waterways system in September.

Therefore...this year's MidFEx Fall Festival will maintain its past format. Our festival will be open to the public on Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 am to 4:00pm. Set-up takes considerable effort and will be done on Friday, Oct. 18 with final touch-up on Saturday morning before opening. Take-down and clean-up is fast and volunteers are usually out by 5:00. Jim Lipka is the Fall Festival/2002 coordinator. Those that signed up as volunteers for one or more of the three days can expect to hear from Jim in September.

MINUTES - JULY 14, 2002 MEETING AT ANNUAL PICNIC
by Arnold Dubren, Secretary

The picnic this year took place at the home of Al Cosnow in Glencoe. After a fine meal, Phil Hahn opened the meeting at 1:30 PM. He asked members to volunteer for work at this year's Harvest Festival, October 19 and 20. An agreement has been secured with the Botanic Garden stating that we will be the sole vendor of apples and cider on those dates. In addition to our regular indoor location, we will be obligated to sell apples and cider from a tent, among other vendor tents, at the Garden's Country Markets event. MidFEx will need more than the usual number of member volunteers to sell at both locations and to move fruit and cider from the cold room to the tent. A sign at the tent could invite people to our room at the Education Center to see our exhibit of 100 plus apple varieties. Jim Lipka said that someone should take charge of tent sales and moving fruit to the tent location. Rod Beary volunteered.

There was some discussion about the possibility of participating at Garfield Farm's annual event in late August with an apple display. Members testified that it was well worth seeing this excellent show, but it was generally felt that the benefits to MidFEx were insufficient to justify all the effort needed in order to participate in this mostly vegetable and seed exhibit.

Looking forward to next year, Susan and Dave Differding agreed to chair the picnic committee. Before the meeting ended, new members introduced themselves and there was a drawing for a door prize. Finally, Jeff Postlewaite gave a Treasurer's Report. After the meeting, Al Cosnow gave a demonstration of bud grafting, Arnold Dubren explained his home made codling moth traps, and Ed Boula gave away several small pawpaw trees in pots.

**Outdoor Informal Meetings at the Chicago Botanic Garden
(see Calendar) By: Phil Hahn**

These are dates arranged during some of our 'off months' that can be used for informal gatherings of member interest groups, committee meetings, etc. These meetings are 'bonus dates' and are not expected to be highly or regularly attended. The Grapevine cannot provide specific information for any given month unless a meeting is 'formalized' prior to newsletter deadlines. Any member who chooses to 'call' a meeting for a specific purpose is responsible for notifying other members of the committee or group. This is not formalized policy; it is just a logical way to use these dates. Otherwise, the informal meetings are just that...informal, short duration, and attended by any member or group of members who wish(es) to take advantage of there sources of the Botanic Garden with respect to fruit growing; i.e., fruit gardens, library, staff assistance, etc. Our organization is highly respected by the Garden for its committed membership, our regional educational efforts and for the very impressive Fall Festival. The efforts of MidFEx and the numerous other volunteer groups affiliated with the Garden are a significant part of the mission of such botanical gardens. We pay a token annual fee for registration as a plant society. For this we are offered meeting times and spaces and the Garden is enhanced by our presence. All members are encouraged to take advantage of the informal meetings. Present your newsletter at the gate as evidence of MidFEx membership for admittance to the parking lots on the published informal meeting dates.

Please use the following address for membership applications:

J C Andersen
Midwest Fruit Explorers
PO Box 3124
La Crosse, WI 54602-3124

North American Fruit Explorer's (NAFEX) Annual Meeting

The NAFEx meeting is scheduled for September 12-14, 2002 at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum in Chanhassen, Minnesota (SW of Minneapolis). This is about a 6.5 - 7 hour drive from Chicago. A handful of MidFEx members will be attending. The program for Thursday morning and afternoon and Friday morning will focus on growing fruit in cold climates. Friday afternoon will feature a half-day tour of the adjoining University of Minnesota Horticulture Research center. A parallel Friday afternoon tour will be in the Landscape Arboretum itself. Saturday will consist of all-day bus tours (by motor coach) of various fruit growing operations, both commercial and backyard, in and around the Twin Cities metropolitan area. For beginning fruit growers, a special 7-1/2 hour class has been planned, split between Thursday and Friday and open to the first 40 members to sign up. For more information, see www.nafex.org or call Mary Lacer at (715)-425-9669 evenings and weekends or email: amlacer@earthlink.net.

Triple Crown Thornless Blackberry by: Oriana Kruszewski

In 1999 North American Fruit Explorers held its annual conference at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. we had a chance to tour the University of Illinois orchard, and came across a blackberry patch, tasted many varieties of blackberries, one was very sweet, we were told it was "Triple Crown" thornless, that was the first time I tasted one and was very impressed by it.

The following spring, I planted a dozen of these certified disease-free stock, and waited to taste the berry again. This is the 3rd season, the canes grow into a huge patch, which is nothing like those plants we saw in Champaign, the canes can extend to ten feet or longer if not pruned. The diameter of a strong cane is about 1". Last two winters were mild, only couple of canes got winter damage. The fruits are loaded on each cane. The berries are as long as one and half inch. Some are sweet and some are tart, depending on where and when you pick them.

The root of the blackberry plant is perennial, but the canes are biannual, right now (August 4) this year's canes are prune to 5 feet , the lateral branches almost reach 20 inches which I should prune to 12 inches in late winter or spring, (the flowers are borne far out on the ends of the laterals, do not cut back too far). I pulled all the young canes to one side of the patch, the less sunny side, let the old canes which are loaded with berries stay on the sunny side of the patch. As soon as all the berries are picked, I cut the last year's canes from the bottom of the plants. Do not put old canes to your compost pile, they will root there. After pruning, pull those young canes back straight, as ample light is important to develop good fruit set for the next season.

It is hard to believe that the hot sunny days affect the taste of the berry, that is the only reason I love the 90 degree days this summer. I find those berries which picked from the top of the plant is much sweeter than those under the bushes, and I learn how to select which berry is really ready to be pick, when the tiny fruitlets, called drupelets, separated from each other and, with a gentle pull comes off, it has to be ripe. I mean dead ripe. The blackberry fruit doesn't part ways with the receptacle like the raspberry.

I always carry two containers with me when I go to the berry patch, one container for those pick perfect for fresh eating, and the other for cooking purposes. They do not keep well; it loses its color only after a day or two in refrigerator.

Thornless blackberries propagated by tip layering, I let some of the canes grow long and touching the ground late in the season, roots grow from these tips. In the spring, cut off the tip, leave few inches stub and dig up the new plant. You can also dig up root suckers and move them to a new location, take suckers no closer than 6 inches to the mother plant and dig deeply so you're sure to get them out intact. Suckers come up badly if the main crown is damaged. I also find a

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Blackberry - Triple Crown Thornless (Continued)

lot of young seedlings come up around my vegetable plot, I think they are from the damaged berries I threw away or they were set by the birds, so this year I will be more careful where I discard the bad ones. I should pull out all those seedlings to avoid spreading of viruses or diseases, but I am curious as to whether or not these seedlings will be thornless?

Brambles are relatively trouble-free plants. To keep down weeds, only allow 5 or 6 canes per crown, quickly remove any sick-looking canes, various species of borers can infest the canes, but if you cut out and dispose of any wilted canes right away, this should help to avoid trouble pests.

Four out of the dozen plants I bought were planted in Skokie yard, the rest were planted in my zone 4b farm in Winslow, Illinois for a trial. So far I have harvested about 20 pounds of ripe berries from the Skokie plants, about half of the berries are still hanging on the canes. It is very productive. I mainly use these for juice and jellies. Not as flavorful as raspberry, it is healthy material and easier to grow than any tree fruit. It is a pleasure to pick them.

Trouble Finding Spray Materials by: Sherwin Dubren

I'm not sure if any other members are having the same problem, but within the past year, or so, it is getting harder and harder to find spray chemicals at the usual sources (local gardening shops, nurseries, mail order outlets, etc.). The local garden and nurseries outlets have gotten away from the usual selection of various sprays for insecticides and fungicides. Most of them are only carrying general orchard sprays, and possibly a single chemical, like Captan. Unfortunately, these general sprays and Captan do not cover all problems. For example, Plum Curculio is only properly treated with Imidan and that product is no longer available for use in home orchards. Special problems like Apple Cedar Rust are usually treated with Zineb or Ferbam, but those are also not readily available, certainly in small quantities that backyard growers require. The list goes on.

One solution would be to pool the resources and knowledge of club members who have managed to find sources for these harder to get chemicals. This is currently done on an informal basis with people calling around asking for help from other members. Certain members have been able to locate sources for these hard to find chemicals or have large amounts of them that they are willing to sell off to fellow members. We need a central focal point for this information and I recommend people sending their information about suppliers and willingness to share chemicals to the Midfex website (midfex@attbi.com), or by any other way such as mail or phone to me. If we gather enough data, we can distribute it, either in the Grapevine or with handouts at club meetings. This concept can be expanded even further to people sharing knowledge of sprays that are effective in our area or techniques for spraying.

Members' Crop Report

This is a new feature in the Grapevine. All members are encouraged to submit information, garden notes, questions, observations, etc. to Robin Guy by the deadline for the next issue (deadlines can always be found on the back page)

Rod Beary reports: the apple harvest is looking very skimpy this year and attribute it to the late freeze. Many trees have no fruit and the overall yield will probably be down by 50 to 70% from last year. Other fruits: no plums; no peaches; three pears on one tree for the first time; a normal crop of blueberries; the grapes look particularly strong; beautiful blackberries; reduced Autumn Bliss raspberries due to dryness (?); rhubarb looks bad as it did last year. We have Illini Hardy Blackberries and they are doing very well this year. In these current drought conditions: I use a 110 gallon "water buggy" and water each tree at least once with one five gallon pail during these dry spells. That is just enough to give them a boost. I am able to water the close orchard from a hose and sprinkler and typically do that two times during the dry spell. I figure on the dry spell (no rainfall accompanied with high temperatures) lasting for 4-6 weeks.

Sherwin Dubren reports that his Triple Crown Blackberries are not very sweet. See Oriana's Blackberry article for some information that may help (also see below).

Robin Guy noticed that her Triple Crown Blackberries varied in sweetness. The longer they remained on the canes, the sweeter they were. However, a major problem was getting to harvest them before the critters got to them. Netting should help next year. Robin's canes are about 8 feet long. At the beginning of the fruiting season, entire canes, all with fruit, died for no apparent reason. Other canes on the same plant remained healthy. Does anyone have any ideas as to why this may have occurred?

Robin also reports: I did not see any flowers this year on any peach, apricot, plum (both American and Japanese) or sweet cherry trees. They were not hiding from me either, as I have no fruit on these trees. Like Rod, my apple crop is extremely sparse. I watered my trees deeply about once every two weeks during July and August, the drought months this year. The trees look healthy, but there is not much of a crop. I'll just have to wait for next year!

Oriana reports that the Victoria Plum scion that she got at the grafting workshop may have had the fungus *Apiosporina morbosa*, as that one stem is showing symptoms of the disease, Black Knot. If you have grafted Victoria onto a tree or rootstock, check it carefully. Do not use the wood from this tree for scions or budding onto any other tree. Do not donate the wood to anyone.

The Organic Post by: Rod Beary

Each summer, and on three apple trees so far this year, the dreaded, ugly, ravenous **C-A-N-K-E-R-W-O-R-M** (Family Geometridae) has struck! Now, I have to admit, that's just my opinion because when I tried to look it up in a Midwest Tree Fruits guide on pests, it didn't even warrant a mention. But taking from "The Organic Gardener's Handbook Of Natural Insect And Disease Control" here is how they describe it: "Adults: males are light gray moths (More than 1" wingspan); females are wingless with fuzzy, 1/2" bodies. Larvae: slender, light green, yellow, or brown, 1/2"-1" caterpillars with white stripes; they loop their bodies as they crawl. Eggs: gray-brown, round; laid in compact masses on plants."

What they do – they (the larvae) totally devour every leaf down to the midrib on any branch they are found; they start at the top (at least mine do) and work their way down to the crotch. They work in groups so you frequently find them hanging together in clusters. I spot them by their work and hopefully get to them before they eat too much of the tree. They do not eat the fruit.

Life Cycle – per the handbook "Adults emerge November to December and lay eggs on twigs and branches; eggs hatch in spring as first leaves open on trees. Larvae feed 3-4 weeks, then pupate in soil until early winter. One generation per year."

My Way To Control – the most direct and satisfying technique is to knock them into a pail with a few inches of water in it. Leave them in that pail until they are all obviously dead. But, I believe just getting them off of the tree is very helpful also. I have knocked them to the ground and have not noticed them getting back up on the tree but since they pupate in soil until early winter this may just be delaying the problem until next year. I also, when I wanted to re-use the pail before they died, dumped them on a slab of concrete in the sun. But, I don't know how well that worked since a few made it into the garage and I never did find the other corpses on the concrete like earthworms would do. Did the birds get them? Will they come back next year? Better to do it right the first time and let them drown in the pail of water!

Other Suggested Controls (handbook) – "Trap females in sticky tree bands as they climb trees to lay eggs; handpick and destroy egg masses on branches; spray with dormant oil to kill eggs; spray BTK to kill larvae."

Notes:

1. BTK is *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki* that is deadly to caterpillars and that means all caterpillars so that while organically acceptable is considered by some to be not acceptable because it doesn't care whether or not it kills a monarch caterpillar or a cankerworm. In any case, I don't find it necessary to use for cankerworms since they are easy to hand pick.
2. I have determined that these caterpillars are cankerworms but the truth is, I have had them in two different and distinct sizes. The first infestation was early in the summer and they were 1/2" – 1" as described but the most recent infestation was mid July and they were 1 1/2 " – 2" long. I am assuming they are one and the same.

Grapevine

Midwest Fruit Explorers
P.O. Box 93, Markham, IL 60426-0093

First Class

Mark your Calendar, 2002-3 Dates to Remember. See inside for more details. (Volunteers needed for all events!)

9/8, 10/13, 11/10 2002 Informal meeting dates at the Chicago Botanic Garden Fruit and Vegetable Garden; 1:30 p.m. See notice inside
Oct. 19-20, 2002 Harvest Festival at the Chicago Botanic Garden Multipurpose Room. Friday (10/18) set up afternoon. Oct. 19-20, 2002 10:00 am-4:00pm (set-up 8:30 am)

2003 dates:

January 1 Renew your membership!!
January 19 tentative Member's meeting/presentation. Chicago Botanic Garden, Linneas Room, 1:30 Check the January issue for the exact date
March Chicago Flower and Garden Show, Navy Pier
March 23 tentative Grafting Workshop at Chicago Botanic Garden
March 30 tentative Grafting Workshop at Cantigny
June 1 tentative Summer meeting. Chicago Botanic Garden, 1:30
July 20 tentative Summer picnic. Site: TBD, 10:00 set-up, 12:00 picnic
Oct. 18-19 tentative Harvest Festival at the Chicago Botanic Garden Multipurpose Room
5/4, 8/3, 9/7, 10/5, 11/2 Informal outdoor meeting at the Chicago Botanic Garden

Editor: Robin Guy (rguy@ameritech.net)

Additional Contributors (Editor: thank you all!):
Rod Beary, Arnold Dubren, Sherwin Dubren,
Phil Hahn, Oriana Kruszewski,
Jim Lipka.

Grapevine articles wanted! Deadline for articles to Robin Guy for next Grapevine: 11/12/02. Please e-mail articles to Robin's address above.

MidFEx Web Site:

<http://www.midfex.org>

Send articles and anything else of interest to Brad Platt for consideration for inclusion in the web site. For more information, call Brad or e-mail at midfex@midfex.org