



The Grapevine

December 2013 • The Journal of the Midwest Fruit Explorers • Vol. 37 No. 4

President's Message

What a fall! The club had another great harvest fest thanks in large part to Michael Zost and a whole lot of volunteers. If you have been following the forum, you know that Pat Driscoll has worked hard to clean and re-build our apple press. He added upgrades to make the press more user friendly and mobile. Additionally, Pat has taken on the task to identify a second press and or grinder. Pat will discuss his recommendations at the January business meeting. The contributions from both Michael and Pat are noteworthy! Thank YOU! Their efforts and those of other members is what has kept the club strong.

A lot of club members enjoyed a harvest fest of their own. Trees rebounded mightily from last year's disastrous early blossom and late freeze by producing bushels of fruit this year. . There were plenty of leftover apples, even after freezing, drying, pie making and applesauce production. Personally, even after letting neighbors take whatever they wanted and a trip to the food bank, I still had 5-8 bushels of apples. The bumper crop produced a long line at this year's apple pressing event and it was followed up by an impromptu pressing event in the south suburbs.

Winter is upon us according to the meteorological calendar. November has been so cold that I did not get a chance to get all of my winter prep completed in my orchard. Thank goodness for a reasonable weekend after Thanksgiving. Top of my list is always planting a few of last spring's grafts, mulching and healing any extra grafted trees. I was fortunate to plant most of the trees during October. The focus of my grafting and planting efforts was to add pear varieties to my orchard. Taking a page from Jim Ozzello, I planted the young trees on two foot centers against a newly constructed arbor. I hope that in a few years I will have productive trees pruned in a columnar fashion.

This weekend I planted any extra trees that needed to be put to bed for the winter. Growing my grafts in plastic pots helps make it easy. I dig a ditch deep enough that the pots are even with the ground when they are planted in the hole. I mulch them heavily to fill in gaps between the pots and then cover them under 4 inches of wood chips. I have found that they winter over without loss. Normal snow, sleet and rain provides enough water to keep them from drying out.

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I look forward to seeing you at the January meeting. One of the main actions of this meeting is to nominate and vote on Officers for 2014. If you are interested in running or nominating officers, please contact me.

—Tim

HELP WANTED

We are seeking a volunteer to do the layout for the December and June issues of our quarterly newsletters. If you are handy with Microsoft Word and have an eye for text and image layout, consider volunteering! Email Robin Guy with interest at editor@midfex.org.

EVENTS

Kurle Memorial Lecture and Annual Business Meeting

Sunday, January 26th at 1:00 P.M., Spring Valley Nature Center, 1111 E. Schaumburg Road, Schaumburg, Ill

We will begin the meeting with our annual Soup Bowl Luncheon. What better way to chase away the winter chill than with a steaming bowl of homemade soup. This is a pot luck, so if soup isn't your specialty, then by all means feel free to bring something else besides your appetite. We could always use a desert to complete the meal.

While we're noshing we'll hear Vicki Nowicki speaking on the concept of permaculture. Vicki will speak to the bigger concepts of Permaculture and then show how they apply to backyard design and take it all the way down to plant selection and placement.

Vicki Nowicki, is a garden designer at her and her husband Ron's firm—The Land Office. She lives in Downers Grove. Vicki has many interests in gardening and food related topics. She is active in the slow food program at her organization SlowFoodCitiesEdge.org. Additionally she is active in a program with Seed Savers, promoting the collection of seeds and sustainable gardening.

Agenda:

- a. Soup Bowl Luncheon
- b. Lecture: Vicki Nowicki
- c. Business Meeting

permaculture (per-ma-cul-ture) /'pərmə,kəlCHər/ *n.* the development of agricultural ecosystems intended to be sustainable and self-sufficient. Origin: 1970s: blend of permanent and agriculture (*Oxford Dictionary*)

Directions to Spring Valley Nature Center

1111 E. Schaumburg Road, Schaumburg

If you are coming from the North, South or East,

- make your way to Woodfield mall near 53/290 and the I-90 Tollway.
- take the Higgins Rd exit and head west (towards the mall). Make a left turn on Meacham Rd heading south.

The next light after you pass the strip mall with Dominick's and Target on the right will be Schaumburg Rd.

- make a right onto Schaumburg Rd heading west. The next light is National Parkway. Make your way to the left hand lane. The entrance to Spring Valley is less than 100 feet after National Parkway on the left.

If you're coming from the West, make your way to Woodfield and follow the above directions or get onto Schaumburg road any time before Plum Grove Rd heading east. The next light will be National Parkway, and Spring Valley will be on the right just before the light.

Thoughts from Leonard Wright

I met Bob Kurle about 1968. He had an apple tree with about 250 varieties grafted on one trunk. He had a name tag on each variety. Later, he removed the tree because it had a virus. He also told me that Fred Ashworth of New York had a tree with 350 varieties grafted on one trunk. Fred was a cofounder of NAFEX.

When I was pressing cider at the Chicago Botanic Garden, a Japanese couple asked me if I had Sekai Ichi in my orchard. I did not, but I bought a tree from a nursery in Alabama. It is very sweet as the couple told me.

Several years ago, I saw an article in the Peoria Journal Star about a firm that was propagating trees from the very last tree of Johnny Appleseed. I bought a tree. It is very tall. Fruit is large and flat. It is not a real good eating apple, but it is a piece of history. It is similar to Maiden Blush, which dates back to 1817.

Frozen Apple Cider

by Jeff Postlewaite

Franz Richters has reported that cider made from frozen apples can be quite good and worth the effort. Franz had a very abundant apple crop this year. Many more apples than he could pick or process. Several Goldrush apple trees went into freezing weather overloaded with apples. Even now in mid December the trees still have most of their apples and leaves attached. Franz picked some of the apples, washed them, and let them defrost for a couple days. He then cut them in half and pressed them (Franz said he used an antique sausage stuffer somehow). The thawed apples are too soft to grind and grinding probably wouldn't release any more juice. Pressed this way, a five gallon bucket of frozen apples yielded about a gallon of cider. Franz says that this cider pressed from frozen Goldrush apples is the sweetest of all the cider he's pressed this year.



Franz's frozen apples

Editor's Comments: Well, just wondering if this is anything like ice wine where they let the grapes freeze and the resulting wine is sweeter due to the cell injury and increased release of sugars. Just a thought! —Robin



Note from Jeff Postlewaite: Franz stopped by with his sausage-stuffer cider press and some recently-thawed apples to press. Does indeed make for very sweet and remarkably clear cider. Here are some photos of his contraption.



RECIPES

What To Do with Frozen Apples

by Robin Guy

OK, so raise your hand if you still have apples outside on the trees. You may be able to use them for other purposes besides apple cider. Frozen apples will release more juice than fresh apples. Therefore, if you are using frozen apples for pies, you may need more thickener. Also, do not thaw by adding water and then draining... it's like rinsing away the flavor. Place the bag of frozen apples in the refrigerator for a few days OR place the sealed bag in a bowl or pan of cold water to thaw on the counter. When thawed, discard the water in the bowl, and open the bag. Dump contents of bag into a bowl and you will have to judge if there is "too much" liquid. That's the tricky part. If they were originally packed without additional liquid, you shouldn't have to drain them.

For freezing, note that sweeter apples such as Fujis or Galas are more likely to hold their flavor than tart varieties, but any apple will do fine in the freezer for six to nine months. More importantly, is that freezing an apple does alter the texture, leaving the flesh spongier than that of a fresh apple. Just fine for any application that involves cooking, but if you are looking for the crisp bite of an apple straight from the orchard, eat your fill now before you hit the freezer. Like many fruits and vegetables, how you freeze them depends on how they will be used.

Freezing Whole: Yes, apples may be frozen whole and with virtually no effort. Washed and wrapped in plastic or sealed in Ziploc bags to freeze, there is no quicker route from orchard to freezer. It may be easy, but bear in mind the end result is an apple that is inconvenient when it comes time to use it. In the long run you'll be better off processing apples into something more manageable before hitting the big freeze.

Sliced/Peeled: core, and slice. If you've got apples to freeze, but no plan for their use, this is the way to go. Use later by the handful or bagful in any cooked recipes. Pies, muffins, cobblers and even applesauce can be made from frozen apples. It is suggested that you use a slicer/corer. Once sliced, dip the apples in a bowl of water with a little lemon juice stirred in (about a tablespoon per gallon) or ascorbic acid to prevent browning. You can also, pack them in sugar syrup, or blanche them for one and a half minutes to stop the enzyme action that causes browning. To prevent clumping, arrange slices on a plate or baking tray lined with parchment paper and pre-freeze them for a couple of hours before bagging in an airtight container or ziploc bags.

Applesauce: No additives needed. Homemade applesauce is an effective use of apple surpluses and it'll be nearly as good coming out of the freezer as it was when you made it.

BASIC PIE FILLING FOR FREEZING

¾ c sugar
1 ½ tsp cinnamon
2 T flour
1 T lemon juice
6 c apples (peeled, sliced and cored)

Combine sugar, cinnamon and flour together. Stir all ingredients together until well combined. Filling may be used immediately or frozen for up to 6 months.

—Robin



FROZEN APPLE SALAD

1 (9 oz.) crushed pineapple (1 cup)
2 beaten eggs
1/2 c. sugar
Dash of salt
3 tbsp. lemon juice
2 c. finely diced apple (may be fresh, frozen or canned)
1/2 c. chopped nuts
1/2 c. finely diced celery
1 c. heavy cream, whipped

Drain pineapple, reserve juice. Add water to pineapple syrup to make 1/2 cup. Combine eggs, sugar, salt, lemon juice, and syrup mixture. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until thick. Chill. Fold in pineapple, apple, celery, nuts and cream. Pour into oblong pan or refrigerator trays. Freeze, and cut into squares. Keeps real well. You may take out what you need, and put the rest back in the freezer. May be served on lettuce leaves. This is a refreshing salad for hot weather. Cover with foil or saran wrap. Can be made a week in advance. Serves 10 to 12.

—Robin

RECIPES, continued

MICROWAVE CARAMEL-APPLE BAKE

5 cups thawed sliced apples

16 vanilla caramels

1 tbsp. lemon juice

1/3 c. all-purpose flour

1/4 c. sugar

1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon

2 tbsp. butter

Ice cream or frozen whipped dessert topping, thawed (optional)

Drain apples, reserving 1/4 cup liquid. Cut up large pieces of apple. Set aside. In a microwave-safe 1 1/2 quart casserole combine reserved apple liquid and caramels. Cook, uncovered, on 100 percent power (high) 2-3 minutes or until caramels are soft enough to stir smooth, stirring twice during cooking. Add apples and lemon juice. Toss to coat.

For topping, in a small mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, and cinnamon. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Sprinkle topping evenly over apple mixture. Cook, uncovered, on high 7-9 minutes or until heated through.

Serve warm with ice cream or whipped dessert topping, if desired. Makes 8 servings.

—Robin

PORK CHOPS AND APPLES

from Apple Lovers Cook Book

This is a simple and hardy winter meal that makes the applesauce with the chops.

2 tablespoons butter

salt & pepper

6 pork chops

4 - 5 apples peeled, cored, and sliced

1/4 cup brown sugar

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

Brown salted and peppered pork chops on both sides in butter. Place apple slices in greased baking dish. Combine brown sugar and cinnamon and sprinkle over apples. Add browned pork chops. Cover and bake in 325 degree oven until chops are very tender -- about 1 - 1 1/2 hours depending on thickness.

—submitted by Jeff Postlewaite

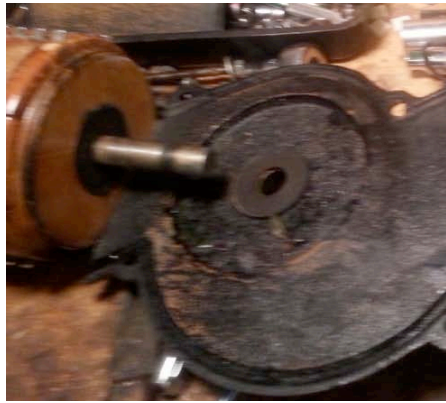


APPLE PRESS UPGRADES

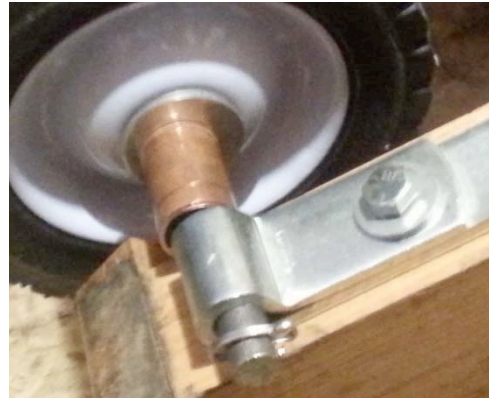
Patrick Driscoll reports that he has made some upgrades to our apple press. Thanks for all of your hard work, Patrick! It is appreciated and it looks great!

Upgrades I have made to our current Happy Valley Homesteader press / grinder:

1) Disassembled grinder and cleaned years of fermented crud; some damage on drum but still useable (replacement drums are available and now made of polymer)



2) Added steel shaft and six-inch wheels that engage when you rotate unit



3) Added handles to rotate unit
4) Made plunger



BOOKS AND SUPPLIES FOR SALE

MidFex has a number of items related to growing fruit available for member purchase. We attempt to have a few on-hand at meetings but can't bring everything on the list. If you would like to purchase one of the following items and will be attending a meeting, send a request to Al Cosnow (buonafrutta@aol.com, 847-835-5278). Items on the list will **NOT** be brought to the meeting unless ordered in advance.

BOOKS	SUGGESTED RETAIL	MEMBER PRICE
Attracting Native Pollinators by The Xerces Society	\$29.95	\$20.00
Befriending Bumble Bees by E. Evans, I. Burns and M. Spivak	\$19.99	\$13.00
The Edible Pawpaw cookbook by Ohio Pawpaw Growers Assn		\$12.00
Espalier Essentials by Katherine Aby	\$20.00	\$15.00
Fruit, Berry & Nut Inventory, Fourth Edition by Seed Savers	\$24.00	\$16.00
Grow Fruit Naturally by Lee Reich	\$24.95	\$16.50
The Holistic Orchard by Michael Phillips	\$39.95	\$26.50
Landscaping with Fruit (softcover) by Lee Reich	\$19.95	\$14.00
Pruning and Training (softcover) by Christopher Brickell	\$22.95	\$16.00
Uncommon Fruits for Every Garden (softcover) by Lee Reich	\$16.95	\$12.50
GRAFTING SUPPLIES		
Grafting knife		\$18.00
Parafilm grafting tape roll .5 inch wide		\$2.00
Parafilm grafting tape roll 1 inch wide		\$4.00
Grafting rubbers 3/8 inch wide - quantity 10		\$1.00
MISCELLANY		
Spiral tree guard 24 inches high		\$1.00
Mason Bee tubes – empty – quantity 8		\$1.00

MIDFEX HARVEST FESTIVAL 2013

by Michael Zost

Congratulations to all MidFex members who participated in this year's successful Harvest Festival the weekend of October 19th and 20th at the Chicago Botanic Gardens. We had a solid turnout of volunteers on Saturday and Sunday, which made the event go smoothly. It also helps build a wonderful sense of friendship and community. The weather provided brisk sales of cider, apples, and all of our fruit butters on Saturday. Sunday the weather wasn't as cooperative and sales were a bit off. Proceeds were still up this year from last year.

With the better weather this year we were able to choose from a greater variety of apples that were firm and juicy as compared to last year. However, the flavor on some varieties was muted down as compared to usual. Our apple/pear mix included Razor Russet, Kandil Sinap, Jonagold, RubINETTE, Fortune, Stellar, Liberty, Northern Spy, Spigold, Ashmead Kernel, Hudson Golden Gem, Sekai Ichi, SunCrisp, Grimes Golden, Golden Russet, Enterprise, Melrose, and Korean Giant Asian pears.

continued

Harvest Festival, continued

We had a number of visitors so inspired, that they signed up as new members. And to see how busy our senior fruit growers were answering questions and sharing insight is always exciting and rewarding as we spread the word that you too can grow fruit where ever you live.

The staff of the Chicago Botanic Gardens as always was great to work with and has really gone out of there way for MidFex and to make our Harvest Festival a success.

A big thanks to the members who shared their fruit for our displays. To Al Cosnow and Gene Yale, for their expertise and knowledge you share with visitors and being at the Festival all three days. Thanks to Sherwin Dubren for signage. To our volunteers: thank you so much for your time, help, and commitment to the Harvest Fest and MidFex. Because of you we could offer samples of fruit, fruit butters, cider, and books both sale days. We were able to set up Friday and tear down Sunday smoothly and efficiently. We really have terrific people in MidFex. A special thanks goes out to Robin Guy who was always at the garden before me pulling cases of apples, labeling bags, filling bags and serving as cashier. I couldn't have done it without you.

We look forward to make next year even better.



HARVEST FRUIT FESTIVAL STATEMENT

Festival Dates 10/19/13–10/20/13

Gross Receipts	5,556.15
Expenses:	
87.5 cases of apples	2,106.25
8 cases of cider apples	120.00
160 half-gallons of apple cider	360.00
6 cases Asian pears	176.00
123 9oz jars apricot & plum butter	260.76
178 16 oz jars apple butter	356.00
51 16 oz jars peach butter	204.00
16 various books sold	242.18
5 apple wedgers	17.55
4 apple peeler/corer/slicer machines	66.04
580 half-peck apple bags	104.51
Handouts (dwarfing, grafting, resources, etc.)	78.55
Bags, plates, crackers, tasting cups, etc.	343.42
Chicago Botanic Garden commission	112.09
Total Expenses	4,547.35
Net Income	\$1,008.80



ORDER ROOTSTOCK NOW

The workshops are one of the principal educational benefits of being a fruit explorer. Each year we aim to have fewer “extra” rootstock available at the workshops so order 2 or 3 times as many trees as you think you have space for. This increases the probability of your success and is an inexpensive course to becoming an experienced grafter. Any surplus of successfully grafted trees make truly unique gifts. Even the unsuccessfully grafted trees are useful for learning about summer budding.

The rootstocks available for the grafting workshops this year are:

Apple:

M27: The most dwarfing apple rootstock - about 15% (usually 4 - 6 feet) of standard size tree at maturity.

Requires permanent support of stake or trellis.

BUD 9: Develops into a tree about 30% - 35% of standard at maturity. Developed in Russia. Very hardy. Requires staking.

MARK: Develops into a tree about 30% of standard at maturity. Developed at Michigan State. Should be staked when young and on exposed sites.

Pear:

OHXF333: Compatible with European and Asian varieties. About 50% - 70% of standard pear tree size at maturity.

OHXF97: Compatible with European and Asian varieties. Vigorous, standard size rootstock. Semi-dwarfing for Asian varieties.

Quince C: Perhaps the most dwarfing at about 30%. Good for espalier. Very precocious. Compatible with many European pears. List of compatible varieties will be available at the workshops.

Plum:

Krymsk 1: About 50% dwarfing. Reported compatible with plums, apricots, peaches, and nectarines.

Mariana 2624: Semi-dwarfing. Reported compatible with plums and apricots. Tolerant of wet and heavy soil.

* Stone fruit is generally more successfully grafted when it is warmer. We offer the roots here for those who will take them home and graft or bud later. Beginning grafters are more likely to have success grafting apple and pear.

Prices are \$3.00 each for orders received by January 31st. Rootstock ordered after January 31st or at the grafting workshops will be \$4.00 and selection may be limited. All the rootstock is bare root. **Warning – the past few years we have sold out of some rootstock varieties at the workshops. If you want to be sure to get some then place your order now.**

Ordered items may be picked up at the grafting workshops. Scion wood contributed by members also will be available at the workshops.

2014 GRAFTING WORKSHOP REQUEST FORM

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

QUANTITY	ITEM	PRICE EACH	TOTAL
GRAND TOTAL			

Please mail payment to:

Jeff Postlewaite, Midwest Fruit Explorers
P.O. Box 93, Markham, IL 60428-0093

Questions? (708) 596-7139
Jeff@FrugalFarm.com

Your membership may be expiring! **Check your Grapevine address label for your membership expiration date. If it says "12/31/13" 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.

SCION WOOD DONORS NEEDED

MidFEx is dependent on its members to provide the wide variety of scion wood available at our grafting workshops. Success of the graft is largely the result of the care given to the harvesting and storage of the scion wood. Please observe the following guidelines when contributing scion wood:

- 1 Cut scion wood only from trees that are free from disease and that have fruited.
- 2 Cut the wood while it is still fully dormant before the buds start to swell, preferably not more than 2 - 3 weeks before the workshops.
- 3 Cut only last years new growth that is about the thickness of a pencil or slightly less. Water spouts make excellent scion wood.
- 4 Scion wood should be cut into 4 - 8 inch lengths with at least 3 buds per stick.
- 5 Label the bundle (or ideally each stick) with the variety name.
- 6 Roll the bundle of scion wood in plastic (i.e.: Saran Wrap) and after the first couple of rolls insert a strip of damp paper toweling then finish rolling the bundle in plastic. The paper toweling should not be wet but just damp. The paper towel must not be in direct contact with the scion wood. Too little moisture and the scion wood dries out. Too much moisture and the scion wood molds.
- 7 Refrigerate. Ideally, apples and bananas should not be refrigerated with the scion wood. They give off ethylene gas that may induce the buds to open.

NOTE: When donating scion wood for the workshops, we're asking donors to provide a list on a single piece of paper that lists the donor's name and the names of all the scion varieties they are donating. This will speed up the scion intake process and assist us in building a catalog of scion at the workshops.

Example:

DONOR: <i>Jeff Postlewaite</i>	DATE: <i>3/18/12</i>
FRUIT	VARIETY
<i>apple</i>	<i>mutsu</i>
<i>apple</i>	<i>gala</i>
<i>pear</i>	<i>seckel</i>

<i>MidFEx Calendar</i>	
January 26, 2014	Kurle Memorial Lecture and Business Meeting, Spring Valley Nature Center, 1111 E. Schaumburg Road, Schaumburg, IL
March 23, 2014	Grafting Workshop: Cantigny Gardens, Wheaton, IL
March 30, 2014	Grafting Workshop: Chicago Botanical Garden, Glencoe, IL
July 20, 2014	Summer Picnic: Hosted by Karyl and Gene Foray. 16455 Lockridge Ave., Oak Forest, IL
October 18–19, 2014	Fall Harvest Festival at Chicago Botanic Gardens, Glencoe (17 th set up)
<i>MidFEx Officers and Contacts</i>	
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: February 12, 2014. 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"