

PUBLISHED BY
THE FLATHEAD LAKE
CHERRY GROWERS, INC

A MONTANA AGRICULTURAL
COOPERATIVE SINCE 1935

The Flathead Lake Cherry Growers®

“Quickview Review”

2015

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

1ST QUARTER 2015

IMPORTANT DATES

FLCG

Spring Grower Meeting
Saturday March 28

Yellow Bay

Cherry
Blossom Festival
Saturday, May 16

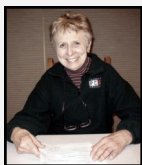
FLCG

Pre-Harvest
Grower Meeting
Saturday, July 11

Polson

Main Street
Flathead Lake
Cherry Festival
Sat. & Sun July 18-19

www.flatheadcherryfestival.com



FLCG
Administrator
Barb Hammons



Editor /Publisher
Ken Edgington



From The President

Bruce Johnson

We have been a Coop since 1935. March 28 we will sponsor the 79th Spring Growers' Meeting! The spring meetings are a gathering of Flathead Cherry Growers interested in learning more about horticulture methods. In the past there has also been accompanying topics ranging from harvesting, marketing and insurance.

This year our keynote speaker is Norm Gutzwiler, a leading Washington grower and crop management consultant. Norm has spoken at our spring meeting several times in the past and his information has always been well received by our growers. I am still working with Norm on the topics for this year but you can expect a topic on this winter's early freeze and its effect on Northwest Cherry Growers. As always there will be time to ask questions of Norm and your fellow growers.

Phil Nelson will be on hand at the meeting to conduct a presentation to FLCG growers about this year's GAP requirements and answer any of your GAP questions

Mark your calendars now for the Saturday, March 28th meeting.

Hope to see you there,
Bruce

IN MEMORIAM



It is with much sadness that we earlier reported the sudden death on December 2, 2014 of Louise Swanberg, M.D., long-time cherry grower and friend of FLCG. She will be fondly remembered for her life's work as a brilliant and compassionate physician. Those of us in the local cherry industry will miss her active and insightful contributions to the success of FLCG and its members.

Time To Start Thinking GAP 2015

By Phil Nelson, Monson Compliance Manager/Field Food Safety



Another season is upon us and with the new season comes another round of GAP audits. The first two years of audits in Montana have been extremely successful and, hopefully, without too much pain and suffering. I have greatly appreciated your positive attitudes and your willingness to work with me in making your audits successful. I am very thankful for all the help that the FLCG Board and others have given me.

I am looking forward to attending your March Growers Meeting again this year. I will touch briefly on the prior year's successes, the minor changes for this year and the things that you as growers will need to do to be successful again this year. We will discuss items that were audit issues last year. I am willing to do a class for those who want a refresher, for those who might be new members or just new to the Global GAP program. This could be Monday or whatever day is better following your meeting. If there are new members I would really like to do an orchard visitation with you.

The first two years of classes were focused on the GAP book itself and not so much on the audit sections. If you, the growers, would like more emphasis put on the audit this year please let Mark St Sauver or any of your board members know. They can get that information to me. After that I will be available to do orchard visits and to work on the GAP book with those who would like help.

FLCG Grower Speaks Out About GAP Experience

By Frank & Sandy Kuntz, FLCG Member



Initially, we were concerned when we heard about the Global Gap program. We wondered if the program would add unnecessary costs, time and effort requirements to our small orchard operation. With production and harvest costs increasing and profit margins decreasing, we worried that the Global Gap program would fail to add value to our family's farming efforts.

Our worries and concerns were unfounded. Reluctantly we attended the Global Gap education sessions, listened, and then independently investigated the purpose and goals of the program. We discovered that many of the program practices required or recommended by Global Gap aligned with our values—first, to produce high quality cherries and second, to follow farming practices that would protect family members and the workers we hire to help us each season, from injury, illness, or harm.

Although the "book" and "board" were at first daunting, guides, friends and neighbors were available to provide examples to help us make changes and document best practices.

We are convinced that the value of the program justifies the effort.

Weather And The 2015 Northwest Cherry Crop

By Brian Campbell, Monson Field Representative

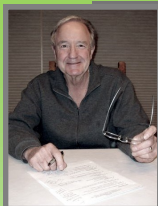


The big news out at the annual NW Cherry Institute meeting was the horrific November freeze in Oregon, particularly in The Dalles. The leaves were still green on November 12 when they had two nights with lows of -2° to -6° . What was interesting is that upon inspection of the flower buds, at least a third of the flowers still looked viable. Growers thought they might have dodged a bullet and would still have at least some crop, but on further inspection, they found that the spurs connecting the buds to the stems, and even the stems themselves, were severely damaged. Looking at longitudinal sections of spurs showed lots of brown tissue (phloem and cambium) that should be green. The prognosis: some flowers may initially come out, but with miserable or no tissue to supply them, they would quickly dwindle. If they did happen to set fruit, it couldn't possibly mature properly, and would drop or at best be unmarketable. They're now hoping their trees actually survive.

Before this January meeting I had been checking trees in our area. I saw very little signs of tissue damage and after dissecting several flowers, saw at most a third that were damaged (mostly in the way of lacking a pistil). Of course, even if up to 50% of the flowers are damaged, a tree can still set a full crop (a few damaged flowers could even be considered beneficial in some circumstances by preventing oversetting). After hearing about Oregon's spur damage however, I took a second look at some Montana trees. Although I did see some minor brown streaking in some spurs' phloem tissue, I didn't see any damage to be concerned about. This is not to say that there couldn't be some harmful tissue damage on some trees throughout the valley.

The numerous variables determining the extent of fall freeze damage range from the cherry variety, the orchard site (i.e. how low and for what duration the temperature was at a particular site), and just how dormant the trees were at the time the temperature plunged. The one variable that we growers can help influence somewhat is the degree of dormancy. By mid-September the trees should be encouraged to go dormant by depriving them of excess moisture. Mother Nature has a lot of say in this matter, but I recommend cutting off the irrigation completely by the first day of fall. If you think of the sugars and other solubles in the tree as anti-freeze, lowering the amount of water in the tissue in effect concentrates the solubles ("anti-freeze"). But more importantly, there are three factors that trigger the hormonal action in the tree to enter dormancy: diminishing heat, diminishing light, and dehydration. Without enough water, the tree will start shutting down.

On the other end of the weather spectrum, California is expecting a very small crop because they didn't get cold enough! Without enough cold winter temperatures the trees don't complete their seasonal cycle of complete dormancy and consequently don't set flowers. Washington has been real warm lately and their crop is at present looking to be two weeks early. All this bodes well for our market. However, we've lost some cold tolerance with the mild weather the last couple weeks and are thereby still susceptible to an arctic blast. And of course this weather could also set us up for an early, frosty bloom. Let's hope we have a slow cool down and not too early of a spring!



FLCG Website Seen Around The World

by Ken Edgington, Board Member

As of This Newsletter, FLCG's website has had visitors from the following 97 countries.

Afganistan	Cameroon	France	Jordan	Mozambique	Russia	Syria
Algeria	Canada	Finland	Kenya	Netherlands	Serbia	Taiwan
Argentina	Czeck Republic	Georgia	Kosovo	New Zealand	Singapore	Thailand
Australia	Chile	Germany	Kuwait	Norway	Slovakia	Trinidad/Tobago
Austria	China	Greece	Latvia	Pakistan	Slovenia	Tunisia
Bahamas	Columbia	Guatemala	Lebanon	Panama	South Africa	Turkey
Barbados	Croatia	Hungary	Lithuania	Paraguay	South Korea	Turks/Caicos Isl
Belgium	Cyprus	Hong Kong	Macedonia	Peru	Spain	U. A. Emirates
Brazil	Denmark	India	Malaysia	Philippines	St. Lucia	U.K.
British Virgin Isl	Dominican Rep	Indonesia	Mauritius	Poland	South Africa	USA
Bulgaria	Ecuador	Iran	Mexico	Portugal	Sri Lanka	Uruguay
Brunei	Egypt	Ireland	Moldova	Puerto Rico	Sudan	Venezuela
Burundi	El Salvador	Italy	Mongolia	Qatar	Sweden	Vietnam
Cambodia	Estonia	Japan	Morocco	Romania	Switzerland	



From The Past

by Sharon Myers, Board Member

AN EARLY CHERRY GROWER IN THE FLATHEAD



Harry Chapman was one of the early cherry growers in the Flathead Valley. In 1893 Harry was growing cherries on his ranch on the east shore of Flathead Lake. His ranch was called

BEAR DANCE RANCH. The ranch, years later, was subdivided into many other parcels. Most of these parcels today still have viable cherry orchards producing outstanding cherries. Modern times have given way to improved pruning methods and growing techniques since those available in Harry's time; however, cherry pioneers, like Harry, are the ones who started one of Montana's smallest, but well known, agricultural industries. It brings tourists every year to experience the "thrill of the pick," "taste of the fruit," or just the "fun times" associated with Montana's Flathead Cherry Season.

FLATHEAD LAKE CHERRY GROWERS®

A Montana Agricultural Cooperative (since 1935)

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