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Tree Fruit News

Welcome Mike Basedow: New ENYCHP Tree Fruit Specialist!



We are excited to announce that we have a new Tree Fruit Specialist on the ENYCHP Team! Meet Mike Basedow:

Mike earned his B.S. in Plant Sciences/Horticulture from Cornell and his M.S. in Horticulture from Penn State University, studying brittle apple graft unions for his thesis project.

Most recently, he served as a tree fruit extension educator for PSU Extension where he developed and delivered fruit extension programs, including specialized programs for beginning and young farmer audiences. Working under a USDA NIFA BFRDP grant, he project involved setting up on-farm demonstration plots of best management practices. In the tree fruit plots, they used two years of cover crops before establishing new high density orchards. The project used sudangrass and rapeseed in our rotations, and mowed and incorporated them for their biofumigation properties. These rotations resulted in a reduction in parasitic nematodes on our orchard sites.

Michael also has extensive tree fruit field and applied research experience with apple growers, including a stint at the Hudson Valley Lab when he was an undergraduate at Cornell.

Mike will be covering the Lake Champlain and Capital Region, and will be housed in the CCE Clinton office. **Please take note: His cell phone number is (518) 410-6823 (This number was previously used by Anna Wallis)**

Please feel free to contact him with any questions, and help us in welcoming him to our Northern Region!

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Temperature and Rain 7/24/17 - 8/21/17				
Locations	Avg Temp (F)	Max Temp (F)	Min Temp (F)	Total Rain (in)
Chazy	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Peru	68.0	84.2	50.9	2.6
Crown Point	67.8	87.6	49.1	2.7
Clifton Park	69.6	90.0	51.2	1.4
Hudson	69.6	90.9	50.9	3.0
Highland HVRL	70.1	87.3	54.8	
Marlboro	N/A	N/A	N/A	5.2
Riverhead	73.8	90.9	60.3	5.1

Early Harvest in Northern NY

Mike Basedow—ENYCHP

Apple harvest is underway in Northern New York. Jersey Mac are finishing up, and Paula Red are about to begin in the Champlain Valley. Growers have been reporting good fruit size, which many are attributing to the ample rainfall we have received in the region this season. Color has also been very good. Some orchards in the Champlain Valley were damaged by hail this season. Disease and insect damage has been light this year.

In the Capital District, growers have been harvesting Jersey Mac and Zestar!. Some other apples being harvested include Ginger Gold and Sansa. Color has been

very good, and fruit are sizing well. Disease and insect damage have been light.

Similar to the Champlain Valley, some growers have hail damaged fruit this year.



I Think that Variety is Ready to Pick!

Dan Donahue—ENYCHP

As we work our way through Jersey Mac, Ginger Gold, Paula Red, and Zestar! on our way to Gala in the Hudson Valley, CCE harvest maturity data always appears to be a little bit behind grower perception of when a variety is ready to pick. There are the usual caveats about orchard microclimates, strain variability, large trees vs small trees, variation in crop load, etcetera, but those variables don't explain away all of our differences in perception of when an apple is ready to pick. Here's my take on the difference between "biological" and "market" maturity:

Biological Maturity: Our ENY Harvest Management Program is focused on collecting data (whenever possible quantitative, not subjective evaluations) of physical parameters such as firmness, soluble solids, starch pattern index (highly subjective), progression of seed color towards brown, and the amount of red blush (where appropriate). Our objective is to build a database of reliable and repeatable data so that reasonable comparisons can be made from year to year. We do not take into account marketing issues; it's all about the biology.

Market Maturity: We grow apples commercially to make a profit. Potential buyers, both wholesale and retail, have been waiting all year for the new crop to arrive. Buyers have a detailed understanding of supply and demand, but may have a limited understanding of production practices and harvest maturity. From the commercial perspective, apples are ready to pick when there is a buyer ready to pay for them. The downside, especially in a year such as this one

were fruit color and size is very good, is that eating quality may not match the physical appearance of the fruit. The risk is a disappointed retail customer who might just might take apples off the shopping list for a few weeks, until the sting of that initial disappointment has passed.

What is the Proper Balance?

In my opinion, university HMP data will always appear to run behind actual grower harvest practice. My phone isn't ringing off the hook with anxious buyers who wanted the season to start weeks ago, and I'm not managing large harvest crews across widely scattered orchards. While I do worry about harvesting research plots at the proper time, it's nothing like coordinating commercial picks over hundreds of acres of plantings. There's always a risk of falling behind due to bad weather, labor shortages, and equipment breakdowns. The downside risk of delaying the harvest until perfect biological maturity is achieved is high, and is an impossible, and impractical standard to reach consistently. While that is the reality in the orchard, the market reality is that today's customer places a high value on eating quality, and have many dietary options to turn to if they are disappointed with their initial apple experiences. A balance between product quality and harvest expediency must be found so that consumer demand for apples increases over time, and that's only going to happen when the consumer recalls a fabulous eating experience. The customer is not likely to remember whether they purchased those first apples on September 3rd or September 8th.