



First Update of Precision Chemical Thinning Studies in Western NY

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Here we summarize the progress of thinning from the first fruit measurements taken by Western apple growers and at the NY State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva this season. Most all blocks (not to say all), fruit set heavily. Diameter of the largest Gala and Honeycrisp fruitlets within the cluster measured from 10-14 yesterday. The differentiation between fruit that will stay and fruit that will drop started to be more evident after the very hot temperatures experienced on Wednesday May 30 this week (90F or higher in some areas) and for the brave growers who have sprayed a full rate (Maxcel on Galas or NAA on HC) right after petal fall. As mentioned during the thinning meeting, we do not get a lot of thinning at petal fall (4-6mm) as we get at 8-12mm fruit size and rates and given the perfect weather last and this week growers should have hit those Gala trees harder. Apple trees experienced a carbohydrate deficit which safely increased the thinning efficacy of NAA and Maxcel (especially Maxcel) applied at full rates. I have not heard any grower who went with the full rates and have overthinned their blocks. In Geneva, in most of our blocks we have put a bloom spray 2 weeks ago and our petal fall sprays on the 23rd at full rates and no overthinning occurred. In fact, we just sprayed those trees again early this morning – hopefully the last spray!

Today all the earlier sprays have effectively reduced the number of fruits per tree in about 50-75% - the higher the rate the used the more thinning was achieved – but still not enough. None of the blocks have reached their target fruit number per tree, and all requires a second spray of a chemical thinner to effectively target and thin fruit at the 10-12mm thinning window.

Do not wait too long to spray your blocks! Fruit are growing very fast and you may miss your thinning window. Temperatures are going to cool down a bit and the carbon model is predicting a surplus for next few days. That means you will have a hard time to thin, especially those who have not sprayed anything yet.

And remember that for Honeycrisp the earlier you get your thinning done the better for return bloom. Thinning at 15-20mm fruit size can be too late!

