

Hershey Wrap Up & Mid-Winter Observations

by Dr. Robert Crassweller

It was good seeing everyone at the Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention. It looked like there was a lot of interest in not only the educational sessions but also the trade show. You should always support the vendors at the trade show; it is due, in part to their presence, that we had such a successful convention.

Right from the start the Tree Fruit session had a full room. The presentation on Spotted Lanternfly drew a full house. I saw this presentation last November at a meeting in Winchester, VA. This is one serious pest that has the potential to spread as fast or faster than BMSB. Thankfully, both PSU & PDA are responding rapidly to reduce potential damage and spread. Like BMSB, this pest will impact all the citizens of Pennsylvania and consequently there will be considerable private citizen support for eradication.

We conducted the 12th Annual Mid-Atlantic Cider Contest on Tuesday morning. First, I have to thank my judges; Becky Weipz, Jim Schupp, Dean Polk, Brian Lehman, Megan Muehlbauer, Kathy Demchak, Bryan Butler and Larry Hull. They did an outstanding job carefully evaluating all 19 entries. The first place winner was Metrick's Harvest View Farm Market in Butler, PA.

I also want to thank Adams County Nursery, Waffler Nursery, Midwest Apple Improvement Association, Chris Walsh, Jim Schupp and Don Smith for bringing apple cultivars for the Variety Showcase on Wednesday. Again, the room was full and I thought we had a good discussion about the merits and deficiencies of the cultivars on display. Contrary to what a lot of attendees want, we will be waiting a year or so before doing this type of session again. Hopefully, the next time the growing season will not be as trying and my fruit quality will be better.

The Board of Directors of SHAP had a fruitful meeting with Dean Roush, Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences while in Hershey. The communication channel has been greatly facilitated by the SHAP Board and Research Committee. The two way communication channel is in large part responsible for the hiring of Drs. Dana Choi and Long He as the new Agricultural Engineers. I hope that you had a chance to meet the two newest members of the Fruit Team. Dana is located on campus while Long is located down at the Fruit Lab in Biglerville.

Speaking of new Fruit Team members, Don Seifrit joined the team on January 15 and is based out of Berks County. One of the areas he will be focusing on is IPM strategies for tree fruit. His other responsibility will be to continue the development of an on-line tree fruit course that will be available to the public. We will also be

hiring a replacement for Dr. Tara Baugher, who is taking on a reduced role in Adams County as she phases into retirement.

We are in the middle of our winter Fruit school meeting swings. So far the weather has been good (knock on wood). The snow storms seem to occur outside our travel times. I can remember when this was not always the case. As part of the meetings we are also selling the new Commercial Tree Fruit Production Guide. I took delivery of 18 boxes of guides on Friday, February 16 and carried 16 of them in the back of my fleet vehicle to the second week of meetings. Kari Peter was the coordinator of the rewrite of this guide. She is extolling the virtues of the new changes in the guide at all the winter meetings. As she has stated "...this is more than a spray guide." Hopefully you will see that there is a lot more to the publication than a listing of chemicals to control disease and insects. If you have ANY suggestions on things you would like to see in future guides, be sure to tell us. I will be coordinating the next production guide in two years. Literally, as soon as this guide is produced we start looking at other items that can be added for improvements.

Finally, on a personal note, I want to thank all of you for your condolences on the death of my brother. We attended his internment in Arlington National Cemetery on February 8. He was a Major in the U.S. Army and Silver Star recipient that served in Vietnam and passed away due to complications from exposure to Agent Orange.