

Editorial Views

by Dr. Robert Crassweller

“Bits and Pieces”

It's hard to believe that another growing season is fast approaching. It seems like we just put last year's wet season behind us. Winter fruit schools had numerous presentations and discussions about that season and what may be the results. We will see if we are good prognosticators for this season. I have to admit, in my 35 years of winter meetings, I do not remember this much disruption to the schedule due to weather. I was also amazed that PSU main campus cancelled classes so many times. I can remember back to the winter of 1993 as the last time main campus was closed.

As we turn to spring, we will begin planning for the next Mid Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention. The convention committee will meet the end of March to review this past meeting and plan for topics and speakers for 2020. If any of you have ideas for speakers or topics for the tree fruit program, drop me a note (rmc7@psu.edu). I am thinking of how we might hold a smaller Variety Showcase at the meeting.

That possibility again raises the crazy situation of the availability of apple cultivars and rootstocks. I look back over my career and see how we have gone from the dominance of 3-4 main cultivars, to the plethora of selections we now have. I guess we always had a wide selection of cultivars for local retail market sales, but with 'branding' there are a lot of cultivars competing for space in the supermarket shelves. Growing up in the Midwest, our dominant cultivar was Jonathan; hence my preference for more tart fruit and cider. Locally, within the state, we did have selections like Melrose and Holiday; but these were only available at farm market stands. Susan Brown at Cornell University had a good article in the summer issue of the *NY Fruit Quarterly* – “Update on New Apple Varieties, Managed Varieties and Clubs”. It would be well worth your time to take a look at it.

It will be interesting to see how the introduction of Cosmic Crisp from Washington will impact our local grocery stores. We were out in Washington during the fall

of 2017 and saw a lot of acreage of this new cultivar. I have read articles in the *Good Fruit Grower* about the number of trees that are in the ground already and it is staggering. This is a new approach to growing and marketing. Related to this is the *US Apple* report that Gala has overtaken Delicious in production.