

President's Message 7-19

I recently had the pleasure of taking a trip with a small tour group to visit some apple growers in the Rochester N.Y. area. These growers were kind enough to open their doors and let us see inside their operations. They were open and very giving of their time. It is wonderful to be part of an industry where people are so willing to share their successes and failures in order to help out their fellow grower.

To say that these orchards were managed intensively almost seems like an understatement. The plantings ranged from 3' x 12' (1210 trees/acre) to 2' x 10' (2178 trees/acre). Harvest platforms were being used in each operation to some degree. Pollinating with drones, assessing crop load with an "Intelligent Fruit Vision" system, blossom thinning, hedging, hail nets, video cameras monitoring the picking operation, etc., etc. It made me wonder, are they made out of money, crazy, or both. Or are we so far behind that we may never catch up?

The "Club Variety" model has really taken hold there as well, Sweet Tango, Koru, Smitten, Snapdragon, Evercrisp, Ludacrisp were all in the mix along with Galas, Honeycrisp and Fuji. We heard no talk of Golds or Romes, that's for sure. Macs, Cortlands and Empries, their "go-to" varieties 20 years ago, are seemingly out of the picture altogether as well.

It was a great trip. It not only provided an opportunity to see what growers are doing in other regions, it provided an opportunity to network with other growers from our community here in Pennsylvania. It was the kind of trip SHAP used to do with our summer tour. I'm kind of sad that we no longer have a SHAP summer tour, though I can't profess to have taken advantage of them to the degree I should have when they did exist. Nonetheless, if you get the chance to take such a trip, don't pass it up.

"We were starting to see dust devils around here, and I, like many of you, was preparing to set up irrigation pumps, getting a crew ready to walk and repair lines, and generally deal with all the headaches that go along with irrigation. We can hold off on that for now, and with a little luck, maybe all that stuff can stay in the shed this year."

This is a paragraph from the middle of my July president's message last year. Little did I know about the deluge to come. As with many of you, a crop that looked like diamonds in the middle of July turned into garbage. We once again have not needed to break out any irrigation equipment. We have had adequate rains, but not too much just yet. Let's hope and pray that it stays that way, for all of us.

As we move into the hectic season of Fall harvest, be safe, laugh a little, enjoy the fruits of your labor and spend some time with your loved ones. Life is too short to let stress take away your joy.

Wishing you all soft handed, gentle pickers (in sufficient numbers), timely rains, gentle breezes and sunny days.

Chris Baugher
SHAP President

