

Fruit News November 2017

Whew! Harvest is done. Time to take a deep breath...

OK, now on to all the things I've been putting off for months. Clean up the piles in the back room. Sort through that vast pile of papers on my desk. Start putting all those empty bins and crates away. What else?....Oh yeah, I'm the president of SHAP, better open up the emails and get back to work. Once the harvest season is over, the SHAP board and committees quickly jump back into action. There have been lots of meetings and email threads to get our thoughts together in preparation for the upcoming Farm Show and Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention.

During our November meetings we were updated on the latest emerging pest, the Spotted Lanternfly (SLF). If you haven't heard about this new insect pest by now, you should take some time to get yourself up to speed. A simple YouTube search will bring up plenty of information. The videos from the Berks County area are like a horror film. The SLF will be talked about at every winter meeting as it is quickly spreading across Pennsylvania, and has the potential to be every bit as much of an economic and production challenge as the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug. If you've grown pears, you've dealt with Pear Psylla and you know how much of an issue the sooty mold that grows in the honeydew causes. Wait until you see how much honeydew the Spotted Lanternfly emits.

As I write this in mid-November, the quarantine zone has just been expanded, and considering how easily they can hitchhike on vehicles, their mobility is of great concern. After hearing congressional testimony in Harrisburg from growers in the quarantine zone, personal stories from Ed Weaver (Weaver's Orchard is in the quarantine zone), and reading updates from PSU entomologists, I fear this is a pest that we will be talking about for many years in the future.

The 102nd PA Farm Show is getting very close. Be sure to sign up to volunteer at one or both of the SHAP sales areas. You can sign up online (or have your wife or kid help you...you know who you are :). (<http://bit.ly/PAFarmShowSignup-2018>)

This is our largest revenue source for research dollars, and with seemingly a new disease or pest issue every season, we need to keep the treasury full to help keep tree fruit production viable in Pennsylvania. It takes many hands to make the week a success. And it's also fun to spend some time working and comparing notes with peers in the industry.

Speaking of research, the PSU Extension team, the SHAP research committee and the SHAP board of directors all heard grower's requests for modernization in the specialty tree fruit world. We put together a new position request and a job description and submitted them to Dean Roush (Dean of Agriculture at Penn State) a little over a year ago. It is exciting that the dean, his team of agricultural department heads and the administration at Penn State listened to our request and were successful in budgeting for and creating not one, but two new positions specializing in agricultural engineering.

The first is Dr. Daeun Choi who began her employment in November of 2017. She will be joining the staff in State College and will be teaching and doing research in mechatronics. The

new classes she will teach at Penn State will help prepare the next generation of horticulturists to think outside the box when it comes to automation and engineering in agriculture and specialty crops. Her initial research proposal was presented to us following our November board meeting. She plans to work on developing new sensor technologies for precision management in orchards. Picture autonomous vehicles driving around your orchard using GPS to navigate the rows while you sleep. When you wake in the morning you know how many apples are hanging on the trees, the quality of those apples, and the exact stage of maturity. Or how about a drone that flies over your orchard to detect disease or insect hot spots. It's all on the horizon, and we now have someone dedicated to that research, and teaching the next generation of horticultural graduates to do the same.

The second position will be filled in January by Dr. Long He. Dr. He will be spending all of his time at FREC doing research for the tree fruit industry in Biglerville. His concentration is agricultural mechanization. He will work on field applications and deployment of automated technology. His initial research will be on automated harvest aids and he will expand to other areas once he gets his feet on the ground. I look forward to many years of exciting new technological advancements in everything from pest control to harvest aids.

Dr. He's position is a newly formed, 100% research position at FREC. This is the specific position that we as a group asked Penn State to create. Now that we got what we asked for, we need to back up our request with support for the new position. Since this is a brand new position, there are many items needed to get Dr. He established and ready to do research. Penn State will cover all the basics like desks, computers and hammers, but there will be more needed to get research started. At SHAP's request, Dr. He has put together a list of things he would like to jumpstart his research projects. SHAP is committed to supporting his research and making sure his needs are met. Here is where we need your help. You will see a letter in the coming weeks requesting donations to help fund equipment for this newly created position. Please consider making a donation if you are able.

Now to take a much needed mental break before the Holiday rush begins in earnest. It's always nice to get away to the mountain cabin for a little rest after the harvest season.

Wishing you and your family a great holiday season,
Tad

Tad Kuntz
SHAP President