

PA Fruit News, March 2017

I recall my grandfather saying after 50 years of growing fruit that no two years were ever the same. Just about the time you think you have it figured out, Mother Nature throws you a curveball. This week I will be spraying fruit trees with snow on the ground. While I've had icicles hanging from the sprayer a few years on some chilly spring mornings, wheel tracks in the snow are a first for me in 25 years of production. Then again, seeing 16 inches of snow while the apricots were in full bloom was a new sight as well. And very unwelcome! Mother Nature sure keeps a farmer in suspense wondering what will happen next. I'm hearing lots of negative reports from all over the east coast. It sounds like the stone fruit in the south has already been destroyed. Most of us in southcentral PA are figuring the early stone fruit is gone, but we're still holding out hope for the peaches and apples. I keep reminding myself of 2012. We all figured our crop was history when spring came three weeks early, but somehow we made it through the remainder of the spring with plenty of viable buds. I guess there's still some hope, but it gets tougher to be optimistic with each passing night in the teens.

SHAP has had a busy month working on the 2018 Farm Show preparations, crop insurance issues, research funding selections, the pollinator task force, legislative action letters, the 2018 Fruit and Vegetable convention, labor issues, and H2-A. Your SHAP board and committees are working hard on behalf of fruit growers to keep the Pennsylvania tree fruit industry strong, while securing the future for the next generation. The longer I sit in this presidential seat, the prouder I am of the hard working people who make our industry strong.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention something that I believe is very important for our industry. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture will be sending out referendum ballots in early April regarding the newly designed Pennsylvania Apple Program penned by the current PAMP board with recommendations from growers, packers, processors, and marketers. If you have read my articles in the past you already know how I feel about this referendum, but I will reiterate my stance once again. Pooling our money for research, legislative action, and consumer education is vitally important for us as apple producers. If you were disappointed that the referendum didn't pass last fall, but didn't vote, this is your chance to redeem yourself. If you voted "no" in the last election, closely read the well-crafted changes and hopefully you will agree that this is a program you can back. Just as in any democratic election process, the results are only as accurate as the turnout.

I hope you will join me by voting "Yes" to pass this new referendum.

Make your voice heard and return your ballot,
Tad

Tad Kuntz
SHAP President