

President's Message, April 2018

They say every year is different. This year certainly does nothing to refute that statement. It's April 17th, 37 degrees with snowflakes flying around, and we are putting a pink spray on peaches. Apples are struggling to make it to tight cluster. Last week while putting our copper spray on, we got snowed out. That's a first for me.

So far I have been very thankful for the late Spring. I had hip replacement surgery on February 15th and needed the extra time to heal. I am okay for it to arrive now. It doesn't have to come fast, but I am ready. I'd bet you are, too.

I hope that all of you have an adequate labor supply. It has been difficult for me to judge how many workers there are in this area. Here at ACN, we are a little behind, but not badly behind. So long as the temporary crew we hired stays another week, and doesn't get called back by their vegetable growing employer, we'll be in good shape... maybe another week of cold weather would be okay.

After that, we will be at the mercy of the U.S. government. Our H-2A order calls for our workers to arrive in mid-May. Who knows when they will actually arrive? Hopefully by mid-June. Although it is very expensive, this program has provided us excellent workers. However, not knowing when they will arrive is a serious downside.

Everyone seems to be thinking that a late Spring will lessen our chance of frost damage during or after bloom. I hope they are right. After two seasons with crop insurance claims (freeze injury to fruit in 2016 and hail in 2017), a crop free of weather related damage would be a pleasant change. Mother Nature will bring what she wants though, and if bad weather or some other crisis should arise, we fruit growers will persevere, usually with a smile on our faces.

Two of the best things about this industry are the spirit of cooperation and the optimistic attitude of the people who work in it. Sure, some guys may refuse to disclose what hot new variety they're planting, pulling off the tags so the neighbors won't find out. Maybe they'll keep hidden that new fangled piece of equipment for a while, or not share their special/secret thinning mix, but in general, growers are more than willing to share their secrets to success, or failure. This not only makes working in this industry more pleasant, it strengthens us all.

I think that when it comes to optimism, few groups can compare to we farmers. We see it here in our office every Spring. As growers come in to pick up their trees, no matter how miserable the weather conditions, they invariably show up with a smile on their face and a positive attitude, looking forward to a promising season. They might complain about this broken down piece of equipment or that rain shower that kept them out of the field for an extra couple of days, but it's all said with an optimistic smile. I guess it's Darwinism at work. A pessimist just doesn't stand a chance of long term survival in this industry.

Perhaps this extended cool Spring weather will end with a week of sunny, dry days in the 70's with a slight breeze as our king blooms open, followed by a few hot days to burn out the remaining bloom after the crop is set, then a few more warm sunny days to provide us with a perfect thinning window, that we may realize that ideal crop.... There goes the optimist in me, again.

Chris Baugher
SHAP President

