

Presidents Message 6-20

It's quite amazing to look back and see how things have changed in the past 10-15 years. Typically, the middle of June through the middle of July would be the time to catch our breath in the orchard. The critical sprays of green tip through first cover have passed, thinning has wrapped up, and we would move to more of a "maintenance" approach of the crops. I would even try to sneak in a trip to Delaware and a couple Phillies games. For better or worse, those days have passed.

With the focus on high density new orchards, we now spend much of this time on trellis construction and tree training. This includes vertical wires in some weaker growing varieties to help keep the leader growing. I swear in some blocks it looks like we have more metal in the field than trees. On top of that, our peach season now begins with the harvest of 'Desiree' around the 1st of July. This is about 3 weeks sooner than our peach season began years ago. While these changes have increased our workload in what was a slower time, I think they have overall been positive for our business. The one item I do miss, though, is going to baseball games (however, this year it might not make a difference).

As the growing season continues to progress, so does SHAP's planning for the 2020 Farm Show and Mid Atlantic Fruit & Vegetable Convention. I am pleased to say that both events are currently still being held. Later this summer, Farm Show committee members will meet to review products that will be offered. The convention committee will be meeting at the end of June to discuss the program content and logistics. These events are incredibly important to the industry, and we are optimistic that they will occur.

Finally, to any of you who have been frustrated by the large number of emails you receive from Penn State Extension regarding webinars and other events unrelated to orchard management, please know that I am equally as frustrated. The faculty and Extension staff are aware and share our concerns. If you have particular concerns about any Extension events or communications which you would like to share with leadership, please contact the tree fruit educator you are most comfortable with. SHAP is working with Extension to ensure that our concerns are heard by the appropriate people. I would like to express my thanks to all of the Extension personnel for helping us to address this issue and many other items this unique year.

Ben Keim
SHAP President