

President's Message 7-20

It seems as though the year of 2020 just continues to boggle the imagination. The most recent challenge thrown our way this year... extreme weather. While weather is typically something complained about every year, the variability is what makes it so intriguing. Many areas from south central Pennsylvania through Maryland are experiencing significant rainfall shortages and bordering on drought. While areas in the eastern portion of the state have seen over 5" of rain in a seven-day period during early July. In addition to these moisture extremes, there have been many orchards across the state which have experienced one or more hail storms.

On a brighter side, for those growers who have peaches this year, harvest is now in full swing. While I greatly enjoy the beginning of peach season, it does bring with it some challenges. One of those challenges is dealing with split pits. Over the years, we have tried many things to reduce split pits: very early thinning, very late thinning, varied irrigation schedules, and none have consistently worked. The best way we have found to reduce split pits in early season peaches is not to grow early season peaches. The other challenge is when a customer asks right away "are these freestone". For some reason this question has persisted year over year. We are always very upfront and let them know they are not freestone, and freestone peaches will be later in the year. But the most noteworthy thing is that even though they are not freestone, almost every customer still will buy them. It is a mystery that, while I am grateful for, still astounds me.

As all of you know, information on new rules and regulations regarding COVID-19 changes on a weekly or even daily basis. It is for this reason that I won't speak to any specific program or mandates. However, I encourage all of you to keep alert for updates from Penn State, PDA, U.S. Apple, as well as "Ag Alliance Issues" later in Fruit News. SHAP intends to proceed with all of its functions as normal, but will properly adapt if and when needed.

Ben Keim
SHAP President