

President's Message

Looking back at past President's Messages for the March issue of the Fruit News, they all looked eerily similar. April does its best to always be unpredictable, with this year being little different. Coming out of March with record high temps and fields that were getting ready to be worked quickly, the end of March and April seem to have decided on a reversal with a cold snap and predicted rain dominating the monthly forecast. Weather forecasts are a necessity in our line of work even if they seem to get worse and worse each year, but I guess they at least give us all something to complain about.

As the season begins, I often feel like I'm completely unready for it. Sprayers might not be completely out of the shop, pruning isn't finished when I would like it to be with the brush chopper waiting for the next block to be done, paperwork isn't completely off my desk, etc. This year we don't seem to be quite as unready as usual, despite parts availability issues that have plagued me all winter. It felt like every time I'd call for parts I was told they would have to be ordered with no clear delivery date. I was supremely thankful that back in 2014 we took the plunge and built a large heated shop in which to work on equipment through the winter. The running joke all winter was that I would pull something in, work on it for two days, and then it would sit for two weeks waiting on parts. I've had spray nozzles on order for over a month now only to call and find out they don't even expect to have them until mid-April. Despite this, with some nozzle recalculations (math being my least favorite subject in school), we should be spraying in the next couple days.

As many of you will already know, we lost an important member of our industry this past month. Bruce Hollabaugh passed away on March 13th, 2022. Bruce was an individual who worked tirelessly to improve his family's operation and to advocate for the Pennsylvania Fruit Industry. Bruce was an ever-present facet of our organization, whether helping out at the Farm Show apple booths, organizing twilight meetings or tours at his family's farm, or just being a good sounding board to bounce ideas off of. One of the many tasks he took on was as chairman of the SHAP Research Committee. In my time on the board, Bruce always stood out to me as one of the most organized and driven people I have ever worked with. Anything Bruce presented to the board was always so well organized and thought out that usually he'd already thought of all the problems and had solutions ready to go for the board. Bruce is largely responsible for the strong working relationship we share with Dean Roush at Penn State, having spearheaded our yearly meeting at the Mid Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention. Bruce was always just a good person to have a discussion with. I remember getting a call from Bruce at the end of asparagus season one year asking about removing an asparagus planting he was looking to change out. Being right next to a planting I'd been working on removing for the past two years, I responded with it doesn't go easy. We had a good discussion of a number of different things to try, and Bruce gave me some ideas I hadn't even thought of. I want to finish up by offering Bruce's family my heartfelt sympathies at his passing. It will never be the same without him, but we will do our best to continue the work that Bruce was so passionate about.

Andrew Schwalm

SHAP President