

President's Message

Well, here is attempt number two at writing this... Like many, we experienced quite the unexpected cold snap in the middle of April. In my time on the farm, it's definitely the first time I've seen the temperature hit 26 degrees twice in two weeks in the middle of April. Snow on peach blossoms for a whole day was also a first. This year has definitely been a rollercoaster of high and low temperatures coming through March into April. Like many, we're assessing how much damage was done and what the plan is going forward. I'm reminded of a phrase my mother instilled in me when I was young; hope for the best, plan for the worst. Optimism and hope are important but we also have to plan for the reality of the situation. I've always found it easier to look back at a year and be happily surprised I was wrong about how bad something was than the opposite.

One of my goals in writing this message was to not dwell on the negative of the year so far. This upcoming month will see the return of in-person twilight meetings. While last year's zoom meetings still allowed growers to receive the important insect and disease updates, it just wasn't the same not being able to socialize with the researcher's and other growers. If there is one thing I learned during the pandemic, it is that there is just no replacement for in-person social interactions. For all social media and technology have allowed us to communicate with people at greater distances, there just is no substitute for face-to-face interaction. Plus, I'm just sick of zoom meetings.

Even though I'm a little late on this one, I'd like to congratulate Dr. Rob Crassweller on his retirement in February. Rob has been a great asset to our industry over the years. From coordinating the Mid-Atlantic Fruit & Vegetable Convention fruit tree programs every year to being the editor of the PA Fruit News, Rob has worked to support SHAP in many different capacities. I know at the beginning of my career on the farm, I always learned a good deal seeing Rob's NC140 trials and listening to his talks at the twilight meetings and other events. He assures me he is not going anywhere anytime soon, so we should be able to keep getting useful information out of him.

With Rob's retirement and some others on the horizon, the SHAP board has made it a focus to look towards making sure these positions at Penn State are filled. We met with Dean Roush at the Mid-Atlantic Fruit & Vegetable Convention in February to discuss with him how important these positions are for what we do. I'm happy to report that a formal proposal to fill Rob's position has been put forward and we will hopefully see it filled in the future.

Andrew Schwalm
SHAP President