International Fruit Tree Association, 56th Annual Meeting, Boston

Jon M. Clements
University of Massachusetts

Note: reprinted from jmcextman.blogspot.com

I just returned from the International Fruit Tree Association (IFTA) 56th Annual Conference held at the Boston Copley Marriott from February 23 to March 2, 2013. Hereafter, I will refer to the Conference as "#ifta2013boston" as I started tweeting from the Conference and it looks like social media (see IFTA Facebook page) has started to catch on a bit with otherwise very progressive horticulturists/fruit growers.

First, on Saturday, March 23 were two Pre-Conference Intensive Workshops. Altogether, there were about 200 attendees split between "Strategies for Improving Production Practices" and "Managing Pick Your Own Tree Fruit Operations." I spent time in both -- in the "Strategies" session Equilifruit disks were passed out and explained how to use by James Schupp of Penn State, and I won't forget Tom Chudleigh's comment in the "Managing" Workshop: "It's easier to increase revenue $10,000 than decrease expenses $1,000!" Thanks to Pre-Conference workshop organizers and moderators Mo Tougas, Phil Schwallier and Duane Greene for successfully kicking-off #ifta2013boston!

Then, on Sunday, despite the weather, the show

IFTA Annual Meeting Tour visited Brookdale Farm in Hollis, NH. Photo by Win Cowgill.

Mo Tougas (Massachusetts) and Lynn Long (Oregon State University) depate KGB cherry pruning at pre-conference pruning workshop at Tougas Family Farms, Northborough, MA. Photo by Win Cowgill.

must go on, but barely! With perseverance, an excellent Pre-Conference Demonstration by Greg Lang (Michigan State U.) and Lynn Long (Oregon State U.) in front of 100 cold, snowy-wet attendees on pruning dwarf cherry systems at Tougas Family Farm. And then Jim Schupp (Penn State U.) showed us how to prune quad-v intensive planted peaches. It's typical to have some kind of weather-related obstacle during these winter orchard visits, and we in Massachusetts did not disappoint!

Monday morning the Education Sessions commenced. Loosely titled "Innovation in Production" and "Innovation in Automation" these Monday sessions were attended by nearly 350 fruit growers and other industry representatives from at least 11 different countries. (But mostly from the United States and Canada.) I should note the overall theme of #ifta2013boston was "Insights into Innovative Orchard Technology." Dr. David Rosenberger of Cornell's Hudson Valley Lab delivered the Carlson lecture titled "Societal Changes are Creating Opportunities and Challenges for Fruit Growers." The Monday afternoon "Automation" session was organized by Tara Baugher (Penn State U.) and featured speakers working on the SCRI-funded "Comprehensive Automation for Specialty Crops."

All-day Tuesday, February 26 was the Field Learning Tour which went to three orchards in Massachusetts and one in New Hampshire. Six 50-passenger buses (thanks A Yankee Line!) were split between a North and South route, but all visiting the same orchards. On the South Route (which I was on) we stopped at (in order): Belkin Lookout Farm, Natick, MA; Tougas Family Farm, Northboro, MA; Tower Hill Botanic Garden, Boylston, MA (for lunch); Brookdale Fruit Farms, Hollis, NH; and Parlee Farms, Tyngsboro, MA. So much practical pruning, growing, and marketing information on apples, peaches, and cherries at these typically diversified New England orchards. Terence Robinson (Cornell University) was instrumental in getting discussions going between our orchard hosts and tour attendees.

Returning to Boston Tuesday evening after a long-day in the orchards, enthusiasm for the cider silent auction to benefit the IFTA Research Foundation was still high as we enjoyed a New England boiled dinner of corned beef and cabbage during the 2013 IFTA Awards Banquet. Speaking of awards, here are the deserving recipients:

- Carlson and Outstanding Researcher Award -- Dr. David Rosenberger, Cornell University

- Outstanding Grower Award -- Tougas Family, Northboro, MA
- Outstanding Extension Award (tie) -- Win Cowgill, Rutgers U. and Jon Clements, UMass Amherst
- Hall of Fame Award -- Art Thompson (deceased), U. of Maryland
- Industry Service Award -- Elwin 'Stub' Hardee (deceased) & Family, Hollis, NH

Thanks to Banquet emcee Tim Welsh and cider silent auction organizer Ken Hall for a fun and productive banquet! Announced near the end, the cider auction raised nearly $6,000 for the IFTA Research Foundation!

On Wednesday, Education Sessions resumed. For the morning, the topics were "Innovation in Technology and Varieties" and during the afternoon "Innovation in Climate Change Strategies & Production" were featured. A featured speaker during "Technology and Varieties" was Neal Carter of Okanagan Specialty Fruits who are trying to introduce non-browning Arctic Apples to the USA. His talk "Apples and Biotech -- Why They Fit" was followed by Nancy Foster with USApple's "View from the Hill." One of the best talks of the afternoon was Jeff Andresen's (Michigan State U.) "Climate Change 101 for Fruit Growers." Andresen painted a challenging picture ahead for fruit growers with increased likelihood of seeing earlier springs and more frost/freeze events like those that occurred during 2012. (Update: we're certainly not seeing an early spring 2013 as I write this!)

Elwin "Stub" Hardy was granted the Industry Service award. Stub passed away in January. His son Chip Hardy (left) accepted the award on behalf of his father from Evan Milburn (right). Photo by Win Cowgill.

Dave Rosenberger (left), with his wife Carol (center), accepts the IFTA Outstanding Research Award from Terence Robinson (right). Dave also gave the Carlson Memorial Lecture where he discussed the challenges facing growers in the next 10 years, including reliable labor, climate change, and maximizing the benefits of new technology. Dave will be retiring at the end of the year. He has always been known for his problem solving and applied research of tree-fruit diseases and postharvest problems. Photo by Win Cowgill.

On Thursday morning two buses (100 attendees) left Boston for the Hudson Valley of New York for the Post-Conference Study Tour. First stop before leaving Massachusetts, however, was the UMass Cold Spring Orchard where Redhaven peach and Honeycrisp apple NC-140 rootstock plantings were visited. Then onto Thursday PM stops in the Hudson Valley:

- Yonder Fruit Farms in Valatie and

Hudson, NY for tall spindle apple planting established in 2012 and Delicious Pruning/Rootstock trial respectively

- Golden Harvest Farm and Distillery, Kinderhook, NY for Applejack and other spirits sampling
- Fix Brothers Farm, Germantown, NY for Orsi platform demo and older "tall spindle" apple pruning discussion
- Mead Orchards, Tivoli, NY for diversified fruit and vegetable farm marketing discussion

And then overnight at Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel for dinner on our own. (I heard the Bull and Buddha is pretty good!)

Friday early morning we departed Poughkeepsie across the Mid-Hudson Bridge for Cornell's Hudson Valley Lab in Highland. At the HVL we were treated to indoor laboratory and outdoor field research being done by the HVL's scientists – David Rosenberger, who is also Director, on pathology; Peter Jentsch on entomology; and Steve Hoying on horticulture. It was all very informative and these researchers (and Extension educator Mike Fargione) at the HVL provide essential support for Hudson Valley fruit growers who maintain open space and provide locally grown food and economic development to the region.

After departing HVL continuing Post-Conference Study Tour stops included:

- Porpiglia Fruit Farms, Marlboro -- packing line, storage, and plantings
- Crist Bros. Coy Farm, Clintondale -- tall spindle apple plantings and hedging
- Wrights Farm Market & Bakery, Gardiner -- gourmet box lunch, cider donuts
- Dressel Farms, New Paltz -- modern storage and Cider Week, but no sampling, and we did not go look at one of the oldest tall spindle apple plantings in eastern new york :-(
- Crist Bros. Home Farm, Walden -- brand new Greefa pre-sorting line
- Fishkill Farms, Fishkill -- Eco Apples and year-round farm market (some crops organic), and more cider donuts!

Larry, Mo, and Curly (no Phil). Mo Tougas (center) is recognized for his service as IFTA president by Larry Lutz (left, immediate past president) and Phil Schwallier (right, incoming president) at the IFTA Banquet and Awards Ceremony. Photo by Win Cowgill.

After the day of orchard visits and a brief return to the hotel we had a short ride to Locust Grove Estate and Samuel Morse Historic Site for an authentic Dutch-Colonial dinner hosted by Hudson Valley entertainers and cooks John and Cynthia Vergilii. It was really great and a fitting end to the Post-Conference Study Tour. Kudos to Steve Hoying and the Hudson Valley Young Growers for an informative and entertaining IFTA event no one will soon forget. Finally, on Saturday morning back to Boston for eventual travel home.

Of course I want to thank very much all the people who worked particularly hard and/or significantly contributed to make #ifta2013boston a success. They include: Mo Tougas, Phil Schwallier, and the IFTA Board of Directors; Tara Baugher for putting together the automation session; Rick, Glen, and Teresa who are IFTA›s management team with AMR Management Services; Tim Welsh and Ken Hall for hosting the banquet program and cider auction; all our Pre-Conference Workshop and Conference speakers; all our Pre-, Post-, and Conference tour stop hosts; and Steve Hoying and the Hudson Valley Young Growers for arranging the Post-Conference Tour.

NEW

MUNCKHOF Pluk-O-Trak Machine

Increase picker's efficiency by 80-100%
Increase fruit quality by 15-20%
Eliminate ladders and picking buckets

Picking or Pruning ... this is a very versatile machine

2 Models Available
Pluk-O-Trak Senior (for row spacing up to 15 feet)
Pluk-O-Trak Junior (for row spacing of 12 feet & under)

OESCO INC.™
8 Ashfield Road on Route 116
Conway, MA 01341
800-634-5557 • 413-369-4335 • info@oescoinc.com

Visit our NEW website
www.oescoinc.com

Use for:
- Harvesting
- Dormant & Summer Pruning
- Hand Thinning
- Tying Tree Leaders
- Trellis Work
- Net Installation

Features include:
- Automatic hydraulic steering
- Leveling system: 2 or 4-way
- Two or four wheel drive
- Compressor for air pruning tools
- Pre-sort bin

Hydraulic platforms are adjustable in height and move in and out to allow pickers convenient access to all fruit.

Since 1932

The Best Berry Plants

80 YEARS

- Strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, asparagus and more!
- Where the pros go for plans and plants.
- Call for a free catalog and plasticulture guide!

41 River Road, South Deerfield, Massachusetts 01373

NOURSE

www.noursefarms.com 413.665.2658

Be on the Leading Edge…

RubyMac®

USPP # 19,891 • An IPM Variety

- Blushed, vibrant ruby-red finish over virtually 100% of the fruit.
- Colors weeks ahead of other Macs
- Outstanding firmness and quality
- Ripens in Mac season with great flavor
- Consistently delivers a high pack-out

"This is a phenomenal Mac. Nothing out there compares. It blows the doors off every other Mac in the field. It colors early and finishes beautifully. We expect a much higher pack-out with RubyMac™. The real beauty of RubyMac™ is that we don't have to wait for color and sacrifice condition. We can pick it without waiting for color and we have a firmer, better Mac that delivers a higher quality product to our customers. It's the Mac we've always wished we had!"

— Pat Chase
buyer for Jack Brown Produce, Inc.
Sparta, MI

STS

SUMMIT TREE SALES

REPRESENTING THE COUNTRY'S FINEST NURSERIES

800.424.2765 / 269.674.8866 / Fax 269.674.3758
summit@summittreesales.com

RIGHT...FROM THE START

Start your orchard RIGHT with Willow Drive Nursery's Proven Performers™. Call for a complete and updated inventory.

Calling us today can help you tomorrow!

APPLES

Braeburn
- Mariri Red™ (Eve®)
- Kumeu Crimson®

Fuji
- Aztec Fuji® (DT 2 Variety)
- Rising Sun®
- Morning Mist™ Early Fuji

Gala
- Brookfield® Gala
- Buckeye® Gala
- Ultima Gala®

Other
- Cameo® brand
- Granny Smith
- Honeycrisp™
- It® Red Delicious
- Morren's® Jonagored Supra™
- Ruby Jon®
- RubyMac®
- Smoothee® Golden
- Spartan

CHERRIES

- Attika®
- Benton™
- Bing
- BlackGold™
- BurgundyPearl™
- Chelan™
- Early Robin®
- EbonyPearl™
- Lapins
- Montmorency
- Rainier
- Regina
- Rynbrandt
- Schmidt
- Selah™
- Skeena™
- Sweetheart™
- Tieton™
- Ulster
- WhiteGold™

PEARS

- Bartlett
- Columbia Red Anjou™
- Concorde™
- Comice
- D'Anjou
- Forelle
- Golden Russet Bosc®
- Red Clapp's Favorite

PEACHES

Stellar Series
- Allstar®
- Autumnstar®
- Brightstar™
- Coralstar®
- Earlystar™

Flamin' Fury
- PF 8 Ball
- PF Lucky 13
- PF 19-007
- PF 25
- PF 35-007

WILLOW DRIVE NURSERY

WILLOW DRIVE NURSERY, INC.

1-888-54-TREES

Ephrata, Washington · 1-888-548-7337 · Web Site: www.willowdrive.com