Topworking Apple Trees

Topworking is the grafting technique that allows us to change the variety in an orchard without having to replant to new trees. With this technique, limbs are cut back and a new scion is inserted into the cut limb. Shoots grow from buds of the scion and after three to four years, begin to bear fruit. The health and vigor of the topworked tree will determine how soon the scions replace the bearing surface that was removed in the process. Topworking is meant for healthy orchards and can be a useful way to replace undesirable or unprofitable varieties without the trouble of replanting. An orchard with dead or declining trees should be replaced with new trees rather than topworked.

For successful grafting, the scion or new variety must be dormant. Collecting scionwood is best done in February before buds begin to swell. Collect shoots that are about one to two feet in length, or shoots that are ⅛ inch in diameter. Smaller and larger diameters are more difficult to work with. Check the internal tissue in the shoots for winter injury and discard any that are discolored black or brown. Store at a temperature of about 34 ºF in a storage room or refrigerator in the absence of any fruit. Fruit emit ethylene gas which will damage scion wood. Other sources of ethylene gas are uncleaned heating units, leaky gas lines, welding fumes and exhaust from combustion engines. Do not store scion wood at temperatures below freezing since this will prevent the “breaking” of dormancy. Shoots can be wrapped in plastic to prevent drying and will be protected from ethylene if sealed inside plastic bags. When collecting scions of more than one variety, label them with their name.

Some varieties are patented and cannot be used for grafting without permission from the patent holder. Nursery catalogs are a good source for determining if a particular variety or strain is still under a plant patent or is protected by a propagation agreement. Look for the registered trademark symbol or list of varieties on which royalties are charged. The patent on Honeycrisp has expired in the United States. Zestar! and SnowSweet are still patented.

Topworking can be done anytime of the season that dormant scionwood is available. However, topworking in spring allows the graft to heal before stressfully warm temperatures occur. The best technique for topworking depends on the limb diameter. Trees or limbs that two inches diameter or less can be cleft grafted. Large trunks and limbs have a better chance of healing if they are bark grafted.

For more information on topworking, call the Highmoor Farm office for a copy of the publication Grafting Fruit Trees or pick one up when you attend the Preseason IPM Meeting March 14th. We will also have grafting class April 14th at Highmoor Farm beginning at 1 pm. A pruning demo will precede the grafting class.
1) **Maine Preseason Apple Grower Meeting**  
**March 14**, at Highmoor Farm, UMaine Agricultural Experiment Station, 52 US Route 202, Monmouth, Maine  
This meeting will provide pest and horticultural management updates for large and small scale orchardists. Attendance qualifies for 3 pesticide applicator recertification credits. Cost is $15 per person to cover lunch. Everyone is welcome to attend. Please let us know in advance if you plan to attend, so that we will have an accurate count for lunch. Contact Pam St. Peter at (207) 933-2100 or pamela.stpeter@maine.edu.

**AGENDA**
8:30 am Coffee, meet and greet
9:00 am **Scab Management Issues for 2012 – Resistance, Sanitation, Timing, & Coverage**  
Glen Koehler, UMaine Cooperative Extension, Pest Management Office
9:30 am **Dealing with Brown Marmorated Stink Bug in the MidAtlantic**  
Starker Wright, USDA ARS Lab in Kearneysville, WV.
10:15 am **Grower Practices Survey – You!**
11:00 am Break
11:15 am **Topworking and Grafting**  
Renae Moran, UMaine Extension, Highmoor Farm Agricultural Experiment Station
11:45 am **What USDA Pesticide Residue Testing Found on Apples** – Glen Koehler
12:15 pm Buffet Lunch
1:00 pm **New Methods for Managing Old Pests: Plum Curculio, Apple Maggot, and Dogwood Borer** – Starker Wright
1:45 pm **Building a Personalized IPM Plan** – Glen Koehler
2:15 pm Break
2:30 pm **Crop insurance update** – David Handley, Tori Jackson, UMaine Coop. Extension
2:45 pm **Board of Pesticides Control Update** – Gary Fish. Maine Department of Agriculture
3:30 pm Adjourn

**Directions**
**Traveling North on I-95:** Take Exit 75 off the Maine Turnpike in Auburn (left turn off the exit ramp). Go through Lewiston and travel east 17.9 miles on Route 202. Highmoor Farm will be on your right.

**Traveling South on I-95:** Take Exit 109B off I-95 in Augusta and travel west 15.7 miles on Route 202. Highmoor Farm will be on your left.

**Sponsors:** UMaine Cooperative Extension; Maine Crop Insurance Education Program; Crop Protection Services, Lewiston ME; Northeast Agricultural Sales Inc., Leeds ME.

If you are a person with a disability and will need any accommodations to participate in this program, please call Pam St. Peter at (207) 933-2100 to discuss your needs, TDD 1-800-287-8957 (in Maine). Please contact us at least one week prior to this event to assure fullest possible attention to your needs.
2) **Transferring the Farm - Estate Planning Workshop**

In Waterville at the Governor’s Restaurant on March 15 (also in Houlton on March 14, but you will be at the preseason Apple Meeting instead, right?)

The workshop will help farmers and farm families make informed decisions about transferring the farm to the next generation. We cover details on retirement and estate planning, legal approaches to protect assets from taxes, tools you can use to transfer farm assets, and determining your goals to address transfer planning.

For more info see [http://umaine.edu/agriculture/blog/2012/02/13/transferring-the-farm/](http://umaine.edu/agriculture/blog/2012/02/13/transferring-the-farm/)

3) **Apple Growing Workshop for Beginners**

A one-day workshop on getting started in commercial apple production for people who are new to growing apples and interested in growing apples for sale.

Saturday, April 7, 2012 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at Highmoor Farm, UMaine Agricultural Experiment Station, 52 US Route 202, Monmouth, Maine.

- 10:00 AM **Varieties and Rootstocks** Commonly grown apple varieties – their strengths and Weaknesses; Dwarfing and semi-dwarfing rootstocks – how and why they are used
- 10:30 AM **Pruning Techniques for Modern Training Systems**
- 11:30 AM **Apple Diseases**
- 12:00 PM Lunch Break  Bring your own lunch; beverages provided.
- 12:30 PM **Pollination and Fruit Thinning**
- 1:00 PM **Apple Insect Pests**
- 1:30 PM **Fertility, Harvest and Storage**
- 2:00 PM Break (snacks provided)
- 2:15 PM **Organic and Synthetic Pesticide Safety, Sprayer Calibration**
- 2:45 PM **Making Your Management Calendar**
- 3:00 PM **Pruning Demo in the Orchard** (weather permitting)

For more information, contact Renae Moran at (207) 933-2100 or rmoran@maine.edu.

If you are a person with a disability and will need any accommodations to participate in this program, please call Pam St. Peter at (207) 933-2100 to discuss your needs, TDD 1-800-287-8957 (in Maine). Please contact us at least one week prior to this event to assure fullest possible attention to your needs.

4) **Farm Business Skills Weekend Retreat**

Friday evening to Sunday noon, March 9–11 at the Bangor Motor Inn, Hogan Road, Bangor, Maine.

The goal of this Weekend Retreat is for farmers to make measurable progress toward using and customizing farm business management tools, such as improving proficiency using QuickBooks, building your farm’s budget and balance sheet, improving recordkeeping, and creating an on-line social network and customer satisfaction survey. The weekend format also provides a concentrated opportunity to talk with, and learn from, other farmer participants.

The cost of the Weekend Retreat is $190 (for those lodging at the Bangor Motor Inn) and $50 (for those with other lodging arrangements). Lunch and dinner on Saturday, as well as snacks and refreshments throughout the weekend, will be provided.

To register, please contact Andrew Files of the Maine Sustainable Agriculture Society at 207.843.7581 or afiles@mesas.org. Space is limited. For more information see [http://pmo.umext.maine.edu/apple/AppPestRept/FarmBusinessWeekend.pdf](http://pmo.umext.maine.edu/apple/AppPestRept/FarmBusinessWeekend.pdf)
Resources

1) Maine Farm Labor Laws
   http://www.getreallmaine.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/faqs.main/cat_id/6

2) Hudson Valley Fruit School Presentation Videos
   Michael Fargione of Cornell University Cooperative Extension has put PowerPoint presentations with audio recording of the speakers from the 2011 Hudson Valley Commercial Fruit Growers’ School online. You need to download and install free Flash software on your computer to view these presentations. It can be downloaded at http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/
   The February 2011 Fruit School presentation videos are available at http://hudsonvf.cce.cornell.edu/resources1tf.html
   Videos from the February 2012 Hudson Valley Fruit School will be put online in the coming month.

3) UVM Farm Management Recorded Webinars
   “Price Your Product for Profit” - Learn how to set the "right" price for your products. Explore practical approaches to cost-based pricing; learn how to integrate what your competitors are charging and your own profit goals in your pricing decisions.
   This is just one of a collection of recorded farm management webinars online for free at http://www.uvm.edu/newfarmer/?Page=webinars/webinar_recordings.html&SM=webinars/sub-menu.html.
   You can fast forward through the shuffling at the beginning of a presentation to get right to the subject matter. Topics areas are Business & Financial Management, Crop Production, Farm Safety, Food Safety, Land Access, Livestock Production, Marketing, and Regulation

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Closing Words

“As I approve of a youth who has something of the old (wo)man in them, so I am no less pleased with an old (wo)man who has something of the youth. (S)He that follows this rule may be old in body, but can never be old in mind.”
- Marcus Tullius Cicero

"It is never too late to be what you might have been."
- George Eliot

Glen W. Koehler
Associate Scientist IPM
Email: glen.koehler@maine.edu
Voice: 207-581-3882 (within Maine: 800-287-0279)
Pest Management Office, 491 College Avenue
Orono, ME 04473-1295
http://pmo.umext.maine.edu/apple/

Dr. Renae Moran
Extension Tree Fruit Specialist
Email: rmoran@maine.edu
Voice: 207-933-2100 ext 105
Highmoor Farm Ag. Exp. Station, P.O. Box 179
Monmouth ME 04259-0179
http://extension.umaine.edu/agriculture/programs/tree-fruits/
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