Welcome to the latest edition of the Maine Tree Crop Alliance Newsletter. This is my first effort, after a long absence, to reconnect people and trees. There is a wealth of plant material, info and experiences to share out there. For the archived editions see: http://www.snakeroot.net/MTCA/. If you want to subscribe, stay informed of future events, want something to appear here, or have news to contribute, email me at jkertesz@gmail.com

I hope that you will consider contributing your thoughts and ideas to help move all of us along. Horticordially,

Jack Kertesz

MTCA Online

You can also sign up to become a member of our Facebook group. Contact Aaron Parker

https://www.facebook.com/groups/mainetreecrops/

Trees of Note:
Unverified Plum Variety

This old plum has been a reliable cropper in Waterville. Fruit quality is very good. There is a chicken coop below it, which may be largely responsible for helping to control plum curculio. It took a hit from storm damage a few years ago. This year I do have scions to share. This is a reminder to please be more active at Local Fruit Exploring. Gems like this still exist. Look around, ask, and help keep a culture of local fruit production alive.
TOOLS

SLIDE HAMMER SEEDER
The beauty of this device is that it’s cheap to make and it will plant small seeds. While most tree seeds may not necessarily work in this seeder, it may be the tool to reach for, to plant some companions in your nursery and orchard. Take a look at this, as well as other videos produced by Dr. Eric Brennan, a very grounded USDA employee.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olO9zX1qgs8

THE PRUNER WAREHOUSE
A source of pruning equipment that I have no experience with. Reasonable selection, low prices, free shipping.
https://www.theprunerwarehouse.com/hand-pruners.html

TREE STUFF
https://www.treestuff.com/store/start.asp?category_id=50
Tree stuff has a range of arborist gear. Some people have recommended their Samurai line of pruning saws as cheaper alternatives to Silkys.

OESCO, INC.
https://www.oescoinc.com/hand-tools.html
This is the place for all kinds of orchard gear, from hand tools (Wheeler Orchard Saws and Allen Pole Pruners are favorites) to large commercial equipment. It can be daunting to wade through their catalog, but this reputable New England business will supply nearly everything you’d need, regardless of scale.

People Profile: Moe Martin
One method that I employed to gather up names of tree minded people when I first started the Alliance was to glean from membership lists of the North American Fruit Explorers and the Northern Nut Growers Association. Moe might have been on both at the time and although he lived just two towns over in Montville, it took me a while to connect with him. Moe studied Forestry at UMO and perhaps influenced somewhat by a progressive professor there, Fay Hyland, he began to plant an assortment of trees from seed. (Fay Hyland established a small arboretum which still exists today along the banks of the Penobscot River.)

Moe has always enjoyed reading about trees and has been as deliberate in planting as he has in sharing what he has grown. He has enjoyed many of the swaps, met a bunch of new folks to exchange plant material with, and participated in a couple of our roundtable discussions. Always kinda in the background at talks, he generally has stuff to reveal that no one else has brought up, some things from literature, but most of it from first hand experience. A guided tour of his family farm two summers ago left me in awe of his squirrel-like propensity to plant a diversity of fruit and nut species, mostly from seed and without additional help. More recently, he has been celebrated as the *Schizandra chinensis* guru, having raised many seedlings that illustrate the variation within the species. Moe freezes the *Schizandra* fruit and enjoys them on his breakfast cereal.

We are planning a group tour of Moe’s property this summer; look to these newsletters or follow Facebook for event notifications. Meanwhile, I hope that you get a chance to talk with Moe at the upcoming Scion Exchange at MOFGA; you’ll likely come away with some new ideas and a healthy dose of inspiration.
NURSERIES

campo di fiori
https://mainegardendesign.com/neo-hybrid-hazels/
Hybrid hazels demystified and sold by a Maine nurseryman who has been selecting them for several years. Neohybrid Hazels - For a review of where the recent wave of hazelnuts got their start—the direction of breeding efforts at Badgersett Research Farm http://www.badgersett.com/

Twisted Tree Farm
http://www.twisted-tree.net/
Check out their propagation videos including:
AFTER CARE of grafted fruit trees

Walden Heights Nursery
https://waldenheightsnursery.com/
Todd has grown apples in hoop houses, has a "wild" orchard layout, grows stock in a cold location, and has produced some interesting videos including one on DIGGING OUT BORERS.

CALENDAR

Stay tuned to facebook or make sure Jack has your email for announcements. MTCA is planning group visits to growers this summer.


For years, when I was more actively growing trees in my nursery, my go to reference manual was the USDA Agric. Handbk. 450, SEEDS OF WOODY PLANTS IN THE UNITED STATES. Its 880 pages covers a lot of ground, with plenty of technical details, and has the right mix of practical stuff to get you on your way. I like the illustrations and I am delighted to own a copy. A revised edition was released in 2008.

GROWING TREES FROM SEED carries the message forward with a bevy of beautiful illustrations and a naturalist's prose that makes it easily consumed. There are notifications about invasive species interspersed with notes on what you might observe in the life cycle of some of the species. While I haven't completely read this book, I do welcome finding the odd tidbits, one that I recently uncovered gave me a pleasant surprise. A couple of charts are particularly useful to have at hand, both to keep track of the seasonal abundance and to help navigate the planting requirements. The authors end their book with a quote from Bernard Heinrich, which might be all the prompting that you'll need to become a tree planter. Planting nuts requires a vision for a future that goes beyond one's mortal reach. If we envision ourselves as participants in the same grand, complex web of interactions as the forest, then planting acorns is like planting part of ourselves.

ON THE WEB-A selection of web stuff that you may not know about and that we don't want you to miss.

https://elizapples.com/tag/apples/ or https://hogtree.com/
Eliza has a strong Maine connection, an intense passion for apples and raises them in a smart, dynamic, and thrifty way.


https://www.mngrapes.org/page/GrowingGrapes
You can download this excellent publication. Minnesota has aggressively addressed optimizing breeding and cultural practices for successfully growing grapes in colder locations.

https://extension.umaine.edu/ipm/apple/ag-radar-apple-sites/#maine Search this site for a weather station near you and learn when to scout for specific pests or to expect certain diseases.
Useful Things: Homemade Orchard Ladder

Denis Culley was completely surprised to discover an “old fashioned” apple picker’s ladder on display at the recent Scion Wood Exchange. Built by MOFGA’s Orchard Coordinator, Laura Sieger, under the tutelage of John Bunker, the cedar rails and ash rungs, made for an extremely light, inexpensive, and highly functional ladder. Denis remembers using one like this back in the 80’s while working with a crew in Weld. Theirs had one variation, in that the cedar pole was not sawn completely through at the top, leaving a spike of sorts, with a metal ring driven downwards to the place where the rails separated, adding an extra measure of strength. Laura’s was sliced in half with a bandsaw. The rungs, initially left long, were cut later to accommodate the bow. A few small shims were added to compensate for any spaces, and box nails were added to hold the rungs in place. This was all built in the “green” stage. Shana Hanson builds similar ladders, some much longer, which she often uses for harvesting tree branches for goat fodder. Her technique is to lay a cedar pole on deep snow in the winter and use a chainsaw to rip it lengthwise. Either method will give you the satisfaction of making a versatile picking/pruning helper, straight from the woodlot.

Dimensions:

- **Length**: 8’8”
- **Width at base**: 19”
- **Width at top**: 6”
- **Space between rungs**: 12”
- **Rung diameter**: 1½”
- **Width of wood at base**: 3¾”, tapering to 3” at top.

This originally had a central (2”x4”) spike at the top that extended about another foot and made placement directly in limb crotches more feasible. This extension did break off and is in the process of being replaced. It did not affect the overall balance or weight of the ladder.