

Midwest Apple Improvement Association Newsletter

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MAIA Annual Meeting

The next Annual Meeting will be held in conjunction with the Kentucky Horticulture Show (Embassy Suites) in Lexington, KY on January 3–4, 2010. We will have more details in October.

Interesting Recent Feedback on “Clubbed” Apple Varieties

Reprinted with permission from Brain Sparks of Meister Media at: www.growingproduce.com. We asked some of those attending the International Fruit Tree Association conference in Germany to name the number-one thing they learned from their trip.

Maurice Tougas

Tougas Family Farm, Northborough, MA

“I would say that the number one thing I learned from the IFTA trip was that owners and growers of managed varieties will continue to be disadvantaged by their inability to team with direct market growers for the foreseeable future. Issues relating to concerns about trademark enforcement will not allow variety owners, and the growers who support them, to benefit from the enormous increase in interest the public is showing by supporting so-called “locally grown” produce. While many local producers are seeing double-digit increases in demand and sales, unfortunately, new “club” varieties will struggle with questions relating to what business model(s) will survive as consumers question where their food comes from and how it was produced. It appears that there may be building a division among the producing community of those local, family operated farms, and what may be viewed by the public as a “cartel” of international agribusiness interests. There were several more inclusive alternatives presented such as the “flavor grouping” marketing concept and “bio” and “natural” brands. All in all, there will be numerous marketing schemes offered to growers and retailers, and while there may be some winners, there will likely be many losers.”

Tom Auvil

Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission, Wenatchee, WA

“Here are a few #1 things:

It has been 12 years since the “allies” withdrew from Eastern block countries. Their economies and towns are beginning to show progress towards western economies. East Germany is moving much faster than the Czech Republic or Poland. The farms, orchards, and packhouses have been modernized very quickly. Poland in 2008, was the third apple producing country in the world after China and the U.S. During harvest of 2008 the growers were protesting low fruit prices for juice fruit at the concentrate plant, while the bottling company nearby was using Chinese concentrate. Global Economy...

Variety clubs and marketing schemes haven't made mediocre products better. The conference had a segment on managed varieties, and a tour day was spent at Fruit Logistica where many of the products were displayed and available for sampling. Several samples were soft, fresh out of controlled atmosphere storage, and had 'unique' flavor profiles. Several of these varieties were touted to be disease resistant. Some breeders in the U.S. have realized that disease resistant traits are often very closely associated with eating quality traits that are unpleasant. In climates where diseases are not a constant threat, top priority selection criteria(s) can be eating quality, appearance, shelflife, and productivity. The European Community, with their zeal for green, may have relegated large segments of their fruit industry to become irrelevant due miserable to eat products that are disease resistant.

Several of the clubs have significant, sophisticated overhead structures. Since these structures are in place years ahead of the actual production base, the amount of revenue needed to pay off the investment in overhead will be staggering. The ability for orchard investment to generate a positive return on investment is very sensitive to size of investment, cropping early in the life of the orchard, price of the fruit, and productivity of the variety. From a business model, several of the products and concepts will struggle to be successful, either because the variety is flawed, the club structure is flawed, or both."

Selection and Evaluation Protocol

Some of you are ready to start selection and evaluation of promising seedlings. In this newsletter you will find a standardized protocol developed by Ed Fackler to help with this process.

MAIA

Finance Report 2008

INCOME

Dues	\$6,475.00
Interest	\$414.34
In memory of L. Doud	\$230.00
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Total	\$7,119.34

EXPENSES

Grow trees	-\$1,886.47
Treasurer	-\$800.00
Postage	-\$106.00
Newsletter	-\$51.04
Office supplies	-\$47.57
Meeting	-\$216.14
Legal	-\$7,680.89
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Total	-\$10,788.11
Balance	\$16,408.09