AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

FRUIT GROWERS' LETTER

By Leonard B. Hertz, extension horticulturist October 1973

MINNESOTA-WISCONSIN APPLE GROWERS CONFERENCE SCHEDULED JANUARY 23-25 IN LA CROSSE

The annual meeting of the Minnesota and Wisconsin Apple Associations has been scheduled January 23, 24, and 25, at the Holiday Inn in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Plans are now underway to develop the program for the meeting.

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TECHNIQUE SUGGESTED FOR ORCHARD DEER CONTROL

A technique has been developed jointly by the Cooperative Extension Service and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service that appears to be working at the present time to control deer browsing on young fruit trees both in the fall and during the spring and summer growth period.

The basic material for use in the program is tankage, a feed additive, that can be secured from feed elevators. Approximately 3 tablespoons of tankage should be placed in a small cloth pouch or bag with a drawstring on it. In this way the bag can be closed and tied to one of the scaffold branches of a tree.

The deer repellent should last from 4 to 5 months depending on weather conditions. Bags can freeze during the winter and will not provide repellent effect when frozen.

It is suggested that growers experiment this fall and next spring with this system on a young block of trees where deer have been a problem. Growers should also plan to make periodic visits to the orchard to determine the effects. (From The Great Lakes Fruit Grower, Sept. 1973)

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TWO NEW STRAWBERRY VARIETIES

Interest is being shown by Minnesota strawberry growers in two new strawberry varieties, Badgerglo from Wisconsin and Stoplight from Iowa. Experience with these varieties by Minnesota growers and University of Minnesota strawberry researchers is limited. The following articles have appeared in Fruit Variety Journal and Iowa Farm Science and should help to answer some grower questions. These varieties have been placed in variety evaluation studies and production information should soon be available.

The 'Badgerglo' Strawberry

The 'Badgerglo' strawberry was released by the University of Wisconsin in 1972. Plants were available to Wisconsin nurseries in 1972 and will be available to growers in 1973. This variety (tested as 'Wis. 599') originated from a cross of 'Sparkle' X 'Stelemaster' and was selected at the Peninsular Experiment Station, Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin.

'Badgerglo' has been quite productive and should be classified as a late-midseason variety--'Sparkle' season. The fruit is very firm, large, very glossy with yellow slightly raised seeds. Berries are uniformly conic and the interior color is such that they are very acceptable for freezing. The caps are showy and adhere very tightly--an asset to harvesting but a disadvantage for easy capping.

Compressibility tests conducted by Wisconsin food technologists showed that 'Badgerglo' should be rated as very firm. During their tests this variety also was very low in percent of juice loss after freezing.

Plants of 'Badgerglo' are large and produce sufficient runner plants for a good matted row. The plants have generally wintered satisfactorily but plants are probably slightly less hardy than 'Badgerbelle' (as these two varieties have been compared under Wisconsin conditions).

Although the parentage suggests possible resistance to Red Stele, limited checking at Beltsville indicates that this variety is not resistant to any of the Red Stele races. The status of 'Badgerglo' with regard to Verticillim Wilt is also unknown as there has been very little problem with this disease in Wisconsin. (From Fruit Varieties Journal, July 1973)

The Stoplight Strawberry

A new June-bearing strawberry, Stoplight, has been introduced by Iowa State University. The new variety features high yield; large size vigorous plants; highly flavored, attractive berries; and the potential for either hand picking or mechanical harvesting.

The Stoplight strawberry was listed as selection 8-6214 in the strawberry trials over a 5-year period and was the highest yielding among the 20 selections or varieties in each test. The other varieties and selections in the trials included several recommended varieties for Iowa plus selections which showed promise from the time they were first observed.

Stoplight ranks among the largest in average berry size. In one trial it averaged 8.5 grams per berry for the entire season, ranging in size from an average 12.3 grams per berry in the first harvest to 6.2 in the last harvest. It also has an excellent flavor and freezes well.

The berries are an attractive bright red with a uniform red interior. Berry flesh is a medium-firm to firm, with no noticeable core or stringiness. Plants are semi-erect with dark green foliage which remains clean and attractive through the growing season. The new variety is a good plant maker and establishes a full-matted row during its first year in a new planting.

Stoplight combines many of the desirable characteristics of each parent. It has the large berry size of Cyclone and Florida 90, but is more productive than either of those two varieties. Stoplight is mid-season in maturity as contrasted to Cyclone's earliness. It probably acquired the excellent flavor from the Dunlap

parent. Stoplight retains greater size in later pickings than does Dunlap and has greater resistance to leaf spot and leaf scorch. (From Iowa Farm Science, Jan. 1971)

Seven consecutive Iowa winters have provided a hardiness test for Stoplight. The new variety passed with ease even without a winter mulch in some years.

Stoplight tends to concentrate its harvest into two or three pickings rather than maturing over a longer period, giving it a special advantage for mechanical harvesting. This concentrated ripening is also advantageous in a pick-your-own operation. In a home garden, Stoplight is especially well-adapted as a main crop, especially following the early Cyclone variety.

Plants are available from Iowa nurserymen. Plants are not available from Iowa State University.

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FALL IS TIME TO CONTROL RODENTS

Field Mice

Growers are reminded that fall is the time to control pocket gophers and field mice.

Cultural practices include mowing ground vegetation to reduce potential cover for their surface runways. Tree guards, constructed from "hardware cloth," are also helpful in reducing damage. Guards should enclose the tree trunk and extend several inches below to at least 18 inches above the soil surface.

For chemical control use zinc phosphide treated grain baits. When hand baiting is used, part the vegetation around the tree and place a teaspoon of the grain bait in the mouse runway. Usually 3 or 4 bait placements per tree are ample. (It takes about 10 pounds of grain baits for each acre of orchard.) Some growers have successfully controlled mouse populations by broadcasting the grain baits by hand into heavy vegetation or other likely mouse vegetation. This technique is the easiest and least costly method, but unless thorough cover of the orchard and marginal lands is obtained, control of the mouse population may not be adequate to prevent serious tree damage.

The most effective period for application is before snow cover develops and after the grass cover is down from frost and the fruit is rotted. Select warm, clear, quiet days as the mice are most active under these conditions.

When mixing baits, a few words of caution are in order. Work outside; avoid breathing the zinc phosphide dust and wear gloves when preparing and distributing baits. After use, carefully wash hands and utensils. Store toxicants, baits, and contaminated gloves in a safe, well-ventilated place.

Pocket Gophers

Pocket gophers live in an underground burrow system. You can tell when they have invaded your orchard because soil removed from newly made burrows is pushed into mounds on the surface. Most of the mounds are made in late summer and fall when digging shallow burrows to get roots (among these are your fruit trees) for winter.

Poisoned bait is a parctical method to control the pocket gopher. Common baits include corn, oats, barley, wheat, and grain sorghum treated with powdered strychnine.

Good probes can be made of 3/4-inch gas pipe welded to a blunt point and cut to 34 inches in length. Locate the main runway by probing into the soil 12-18 inches back from the mound on the side where a horseshoe -like depression is found. Remove the probe and insert the bait material (about 1 level tablespoonful of grain bait), close the openings with grass and cover with dirt to keep out the light and air. Make one application for every 4-6 fresh mounds.

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STORAGE AND HANDLING OF WATERCORED APPLES

The occurence of watercored apples is minimal this season when compared to 1972. Nonetheless, some watercored apples will reach storage. (Both Haralson and Regent have watercored this year.)

Remember that:

- Fruit with slight watercore is usually suitable for long-term storage without too great a problem from internal breakdown.

- Fruit with moderate watercore should be sold early in the storage season. Storage temperatures should be kept as close to 32° F. as possible.

- Severely watercored apples should be disposed of soon after harvest.

- After removing watercored apples from storage, keep the apples as cool as possible. (Apples that are susceptible to internal breakdown develop the disorder quickly upon warming.)

A grower cannot prevent "watercore" in susceptible varieties except by harvesting the apples at an immature stage. (Severely watercored apples are usually overmature and have poor keeping qualities.)

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Trade names are sometimes used in this publication to clearly describe products. The use of a trade name does not imply endorsement by the Minnesota Agricultural Extension Service, nor does omission of other trade names imply nonapproval.

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