



Dreadfully Long Introduction

Posted by [Peter Topping](#)

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[Peter Topping](#)

[Dreadfully Long Introduction](#)

September 22, 2016 06:56AM

Greetings Apple Growers!

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 8

Although I am not a community orchardist **yet** (*more on that later*) I recently had the good fortune of convincing Michael that I should be allowed to join the prestigious ranks of successful growers here on the groworganicapples.com forum! I am but a humble home grower with 11 trees including apples, cherry and peaches in perhaps the worst location in the best fruit growing region in Michigan.

I live in a region of West Michigan often referred to as "The Fruit Belt" because of the incredible micro-climate suitable to apple growing. However, my mini-micro-climate within the belt happens to be at the very bottom of a valley surrounded by dense forest, adjacent to a swamp. Wet, cold and deprived of sunlight but not hope. My growing experience has been difficult here but I have enjoyed every moment of it. I planted these trees many years ago and I have been wildly ignorant of proper care and management for most of their existence.

Now, as an adult (*or as adult as I can ever be*) and as a recent graduate with a degree in psychology, I have turned my eye from education to purpose. A few years ago I set out to discover why my trees weren't thriving and I discovered an abundance of information on how to prune, when to spray, how to keep the soil, trees and bees healthy. After some very heavy pruning I have restored these trees to balance and for the first time in our adventure together I have fruit that hasn't been rotten, undersized or taken by the fire breathing opossum that lives under my wood tarp.

The satisfaction of a successful crop after so many years is euphoric. I'm enthralled by it all and I have been devouring as much material as I can. Michael Phillips wonderfully informative and comprehensive books on apples and other fruit. Stephen Hayes youtube page documenting his adventures in his orchard. Watson, Proulx and Nichols on cider. I've spent dozens, perhaps hundreds of hours searching the internet and library learning everything I can on deer pressures, vole defense, home built cider presses, flail mowers and even pollination habitats. I've spent months engrossed in research and ponderances. The wife giggles at my obsession and my friends don't quite understand it. I'm not sure that they aren't right. Perhaps I have gone daft, but it makes me happy and fulfilled as no other task has before.

With the dust of excitement settled and reality set in I can see clearly that there is but one inevitable conclusion to all of this. The road will be troublesome, the work will be long and hard, but I have the soul of a grower and there is nothing that would suit me better than making a modest living from fruit.

I am here with the hope that I can learn and gain the confidence to start my own community orchard. After I have completed my task of reading and re-reading every thread on here I hope to post a few thought provoking topics. In the mean time if you have anything you think is valuable to me (*even if it is discouraging*) I urge you to have no reservations about replying to me here! I appreciate you taking the time to read this novella (*particularly during such a busy season*). With that said there has been enough words from me today so let me simply put that it is my very good pleasure to meet you and I look forward to engaging in captivating dialogue with you!

Zone 5b in Michigan

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[Paul Weir](#)

[Re: Dreadfully Long Introduction](#)

November 27, 2016 08:01PM

Welcome Peter Topping,

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 187

The soul of a fruit grower indeed. I can feel your excitement and I believe your true passion has been tapped into.

Cheers to your continued fulfillment as you travel the path of enlightenment together with your trees

[Gopher Hill Apples](#)

Zone 8 in California

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[Peter Topping](#)

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 8

[Re: Dreadfully Long Introduction](#)

November 29, 2016 11:52PM

Thanks Paul! I'm hard at work trying to figure out what I would like to plant and how I am going to pay for it all! It'll be an interesting adventure no doubt.

Zone 5b in Michigan

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