



Hi folks

Posted by [Pat Pryal](#)

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[Pat Pryal](#)

[Hi folks](#)

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 76

March 06, 2016 04:50PM

Hello fellow fruit growers, I live in south central Upper Michigan, zone 4a near a little town called Rapid River. I have lived in the U.P. all my life and love it here. My wife and I bought this property (about 11 acres) in 2000 and I recently cleared about 6 acres for my orchard. I fenced the entire area last fall and will start the "real" work this spring, planting about 500 apple trees on about 1/2 the 6 acres. I also will be planting about 2 acres of walnuts and chestnuts and about 3/4 acre of hybrid hazelnuts. I am using G935, Vineland 1 and EMLA 106 rootstocks for my apples. I bought most of the rootstocks in 2014 and some last year. I chip budded and whip grafted all of them myself and most are 3-4' high whips right now. All the trees are currently in my backyard nursery and will be dug early this spring and transplanted to the orchard. I have a friend who has a skidsteer with a 24" auger that I will be using to bore the planting holes. I have about 45 varieties of apples (I know, too many) and eventually want to whittle that down to about 25-30 varieties. My soil here is on the sandy side, very deep, and never a chance of getting flooded, even in spring. PH is about 5.8 on average. My plot is surrounded by native forest (aspen, birch, red oak, maple and pine) on 2 sides. The east side is a mature red pine plantation on state owned land, and the south side is more open (privately owned) with some scattered pines and oaks, but enough to make a good wind break.

My goal for the first year is to get the trees in the ground, head the leaders and get good branch structure started, and begin to build the soil food web. We own 2 horses and a few rabbits, and I have been composting manure for 2 years now. I have at least 5 tons of well composted manure ready to go. I also have a couple tons of deciduous wood chips from a tree trimming company. The chips are about a year old but are breaking down nicely from what I call tell. I also need to get some kind of cover crop or ground cover in the aisles between the rows. I would like to put in some mixture of grasses/legumes so the horses can be turned out in summer and late fall to graze. Obviously they would not be allowed in when fruit is ripe or near ripe. Currently they have little pasture to feed in, only in the yard around the house. I have several apple trees in the yard and they never pay attention to them, even when they have plenty of apples, yet they love apples if you give them some. They seem intent on only grazing the grass.

I plan to be totally organic/holistic with the orchard. I have read both of Michael's books and watched his DVD many times. The wealth of knowledge in the books and DVD is incredible, congrats, and thanks, Michael, truly works of art. But I must admit, if I had to deal with all of these problems with pests and diseases that some of you have to deal with, I doubt I would have proceeded with this endeavor. By that I mean that I have lived here (in the U.P.) all my life, have always had fruit trees (apples and tart cherries) and have NEVER ever seen a curculio, AMF, codling moth, borer, or sawfly. I have never had or seen the proverbial "wormy apple" or "crescent scar" on an apple. I also have never had or seen scab on any of my apples in my yard, or any of the other fungal diseases. Have I just been lucky or what? The only things I have ever sprayed the trees for is when I see some rose chafers on them in June, and they do very little damage and are usually gone in a few weeks. I do have leaf rollers and aphids, but I don't consider them major pests, but I will do whatever is necessary to eliminate them when they are present. I am hoping (probably wishful thinking) that Surround and/or perhaps bt are the only products I will have to use to control the pests I see here? I will eventually be using holistic sprays, compost teas and the like to help promote strong trees and nutritious fruit. I plan to sell my fruit and the local farmers markets and at a local grocery store that caters to locally grown and organic fruits and vegetables. The store is owned by a close friend of mine and he has told me he will take all the apples I can supply him with, but I need to sell them where I can get the best price for them also, so we'll see I guess.

It gets cold here and we generally get plenty of snow. It got down to -31F here in Feb 2015, coldest I've even seen. Usually it will get between -20F and -25F every winter a few times. We get lake effect snow here that comes down from Lake Superior. Even though I am only 3 miles from Lake Michigan, I get no benefit from it in the winter. I am north and west of it, and the bays freeze over anyway. The last 2 winters have been great "test winters" and I did have a few "mother" apple trees that I had bought for grafting material that were damaged from the cold. I have eliminated those varieties. For the most part, the apples and rootstocks came through fine. Some of the chestnut and walnut cultivars in the nursery were killed, but a few did well and I will be propagating those varieties only. The hybrid hazels did fine also.

So that's my story in a nutshell. I look forward to being an active member of the group and especially to harvesting some awesome tasting fruit in the years ahead. This year will be fun but challenging as well. A lot of work for sure, but I love being outdoors and this has been a dream of mine for years, I hope it works out.

thanks, best regards, Pat

Brampton Lake Orchards

Zone 4a Upper Michigan

[Reply Quote](#)

[Todd Parlo](#)

[Re: Hi folks](#)

March 06, 2016 06:53PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 301

This type of disclosure I think is very helpful to a site like this. (Thanks for contributing Pat). Aside from some basic stuff in the grower profiles for bona fide members, I don't think we know enough about the situations of each grower. This can be especially helpful when answering a question. It wouldn't hurt to see a page from each of us, and I am sure it would stir some conversation. I would include climatic, soil and other growing conditions, and perhaps most importantly, goals. In this way we could refer back to it when a person makes a post, to put things in perspective.

[Walden Heights Nursery & Orchard](#)

Zone 3 in Vermont

[Reply Quote](#)

[Michael Phillips](#)

[Re: Hi folks](#)

March 07, 2016 12:30AM

Moderator

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 621

Which is precisely the idea behind [Grower Profiles](#) linked to one's signature in every post. All it takes is for a [bona-fide member](#) to request an invitation from me to do such. No one has in the past two years. There are costs affiliated with maintaining this site so this offer won't be extended to non-members. Period. But a good hundred of the participants in this forum could indeed set up a profile today if they so chose . . . yet only twenty-five have to date.

Introductory posts like this are certainly fine but linking back in such cases will involved inserting a hyperlink into every next post. **The wheel has already been invented!** The question areas in the profile can be refined though there is a limit to how many bytes can be used in any single profile. Suggestions are always welcome. Set-up is a little wieldy but that's what we could afford.

Other than that, Welcome Pat!

[Lost Nation Orchard](#)

Zone 4b in New Hampshire

[Reply Quote](#)

[Paul Weir](#)

[Re: Hi folks](#)

March 08, 2016 12:55AM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 187

Welcome Pat! I can tell by your enthusiasm that you will be doing great things in the future.

Going to put in a plug & a cheer for becoming a full fledged member and for creating a Grower Profile too.

As you begin producing your fine holistic fruits & nuts on the farm, having solid avenues to market that produce to will be important. I have found that, my grower profile has helped me obtain new customers, all by itself - via search engine queries, as well as helping to bring deeper understanding to my clients of my holistic philosophy when shared via a web link . . . not to mention, as we invite folks to visit our grower profile, they will often take time to read those of the other members and to then become exposed to our entire forum and website too. . . This benefits our entire shared way of orchard being. . . *and full membership can be yours for just a little more than the cost of a bushel box of apples.* . . Cool huh?!

I enjoyed reading the details of your progress and plans too. Post up some pictures when you can. Best of luck!

[Gopher Hill Apples](#)

Zone 8 in California

[Reply Quote](#)

[Pat Pryal](#)

[Re: Hi folks](#)

March 08, 2016 03:32AM

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 76

Thanks Paul and Todd for your kind words. I do intend on joining the Grower profile in the near future. Right now I don't have much to offer....LOL I will try to get some pictures posted at some point after everything is transplanted and growing.

This spring is definitely looking to be coming early. It was in the low 50's here today, and the longer range forecasts for March-May is calling for temps to be WAY above normal for the northern tier of states. I'm afraid some growers may see bloom before long, which would obviously not be a good thing. The early spring will be good for me and let me get the trees transplanted sooner than I had expected, as well as some of the other chores that need to be done as well.

I'm not sure this is the venue to ask, but I'm looking for Sandow and Kestrel apple scion if someone has any or knows where I can get some.

Also, I have about 175 Antonovka rootstock that I was originally going to use but decided not to. If anyone needs some, let me know otherwise I'm going to just dump them later this spring. They are all in the 1/4"- 1/2" caliper . They all survived -31F here last winter with

no problem.

thanks, Pat

[Reply Quote](#)

[Todd Parlo](#)

[Re: Hi folks](#)

March 08, 2016 05:47PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 301

Pat, I have Sandow still, but I ran out of Kestrel for this year. You can go to waldenheightsnursery.com and it will give you the skinny on ordering.

As for the weather, I have had customers all over the country describe very weird weather, including mildness in the upper midwest and Alaska, but those in pockets of the east like Conn with very cold events. I really hope we all do not take to heart these long range forecasts. There is nothing to prevent cold weather from returning this season, or an extended winter. This is computer modeling, and they do the best they can, but a grower being caught with their pants down is self induced. I for one will be scheduling plant out, and peas in the ground for the same date as in the past. Preparation for an early budbreak for the orchard is simply materials on hand and making sure the sprayer is in working order.

[Walden Heights Nursery & Orchard](#)

Zone 3 in Vermont

[Reply Quote](#)

[Pat Pryal](#)

[Re: Hi folks](#)

March 11, 2016 02:04AM

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 76

Thanks Todd, appreciate the offer. I also do not tend to put much weight on longer term forecasts, but this winter with the El Nino, the forecast was pretty accurate, and evidently it is still pretty strong, so I tend to think that the March - May "much warmer than normal" forecast just might be fairly accurate. I've never seen an April without at least a few hard frosts and May always has a few too. Our last frost date here is May 30th. So maybe we won't get any in May this year, who knows. I've heard that the apple growers in lower Michigan are getting worried and hoping that colder weather moves back in after this major warm-up this weekend, and stays in place for the rest of March.

Pat

[Reply Quote](#)

[Pat Pryal](#)

[Re: Hi folks](#)

March 27, 2016 03:31PM

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 76

I hope no one has any trees in bloom yet?

Major arctic outbreak for next week

[\[www.accuweather.com\]](http://www.accuweather.com)

Brampton Lake Orchards

Zone 4a Upper Michigan

[Reply Quote](#)


[Joanne Patton](#)

[Re: Hi folks](#)

March 30, 2016 03:05AM

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 62

I just rewatched parts of Michael's DVD and recall he mentioned that spraying kelp (not the dry concentrate) gives a couple of degrees frost protection. Might be worth a try if some trees have gotten impatient.  smiling smiley

Good luck !!

Joanne Patton, Squire Oaks Farm

Zone 6A, Northern Virginia

[Reply Quote](#)

[Tim Bates](#)

[Re: Hi folks](#)

April 01, 2016 11:47PM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 58

I know it's not fair to compare in my "zone" but i am in full bloom and beyond in certain varieties and the pears are set. Welcome Pat! You sound like the right kinda folk for this group.

[Reply Quote](#)

[Pat Pryal](#)

[Re: Hi folks](#)

April 03, 2016 04:56PM

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 76

Thanks Tim. Things are just "slightly" different here in northern Michigan ! LOL Currently 19F and snowing hard. Supposed to get 3-5" today, welcome to spring ! All my trees in the nursery are still sound asleep thankfully. I hope to be transplanting them out into the orchard in about 10 days, all 450 of them. The warm weather we had in March has been replaced by weather that is closer to what we normally get

in late February. It always seems to average out over time. Accuweather is saying that April, for the Upper Midwest and northern Plains is "supposed" to be much above normal. Well, the first 2 weeks looks to be much BELOW normal for us, so the last 1/2 will need to be in the 60's and 70's for that forecast to come true, I seriously doubt that is going to happen. So much for longer term forecasts, they usually are not even close to what you actually experience. I'm just hoping for an average summer with adequate or even above average rainfall. My new trees will need plenty of water, and I'm hoping mother nature takes care of it and saves me a lot of time and work .

happy growing, Pat

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