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FRUIT GARDENER

California Rare Fruit Growers



VOTE CARD
YOUR ENCLOSED
PROXY

Year of the Pome Fruit Begins

A Look at Pigmented Citrus

Some Uncommonly Cultivated Chiles

Ask the Experts

ABOUT PEAR BLIGHT AND WOOLLY APPLE APHID

Eunice Messner, Fruit Specialist Coordinator

Readers should send questions for CRFG Fruit Specialists directly to me. I will select questions of general interest and relay the answers here. Other fruit-related questions will continue to be handled by the appropriate CRFG specialist. For answers on other horticultural subjects of general interest, I will Ask the Experts inside and outside CRFG. Please write or call: 552 S. Circulo Lazo, Anaheim Hills, CA 92807; (714) 281-3903. Questions may be edited for brevity.

Q Where do we stand on improving pear resistance to fire blight?

A To be released for the '95 nursery season is 'Potomac', a new pear with superior resistance to fire blight. 'Potomac' has excellent flavor and texture and is equal or better in quality and productivity to 'Mangess' and 'Moonglow', two other pears developed for their fire-blight resistance in the 1960s, all by the same USDA program in Kearneysville, WV.

According to the Rodale Press book, *Encyclopedia of Natural Insects and Disease Control*, members of the Rosaceae family are subject to fire blight; this includes loquats, quince, apples and pears.

Insects and wind are responsible for carrying the bacterium and warm, moist weather favors infection, especially during bloom. Highly succulent growth favors development of the disease, as do excessive nitrogen fertilization, late fertilizer application, poor drainage, and other factors that promote succulent growth or delay hardening of the tissue near the end of summer.

The manner of pruning can go a long way to preventing fire blight. Generally, trees should be pruned every year so that only small cuts will be needed. On young trees, cut out infected twigs as soon as they can be seen, especially in early summer, making the cut at least 12 inches below evidence of infection as shown by darkening of the bark surface (the pathogen precedes the visible infection). The cutting tool should be disinfected after each cut with one part household bleach to nine parts water. The knife does not have to be disinfected during the dormant season. In winter, all infections from the previous year should be cut out, making the cut four inches below the basal edge of the canker

or infected twig. The extent of lesions can be determined on smooth bark by looking for the darker color that is symptomatic of trouble. If there is any doubt, make small cuts with a knife to see if the affected inner bark tissue is water-soaked.

Q What is the white, cottony stuff on my apple tree? Even the roots have whitish galls that look very similar to root-knot nematodes occurring on some vegetable and peach trees roots. Supposedly, apple trees are resistant to that problem.

—Nan Hansen, Anaheim, Calif.

A The tree has woolly apple aphid. The aphid sucks the sap from the tree and produces a white cottony mass as a coating. If uncontrolled, the aphids burrow into the soil and feed on the roots; this inhibits nutrient and water uptake to the tree and stunts root development. Aphids especially like to develop on wounds or pruning cuts, so it is best to seal cut limbs.

In time, if the aphids are not controlled, large, warty growths will appear on the limbs where the aphids have been feeding.

Dormant sprays or insecticidal soaps will help as will the chalcid parasitoid wasp and beneficial nematodes. If the roots, however, are badly infected, remove the tree! Then plant—in a different location—an apple tree that has either 'MM106' or 'MM111' as a rootstock. Both are resistant to woolly apple aphid and form a semi-dwarf tree. □

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Note: The open position of CRFG Guava specialist (announced in the last issue) will be filled by Shalom Sherman, 23044 Victory Blvd., Woodland Hills, CA 91367 (818-999-2993). Shalom has over a thousand guava trees from all over the world on his guava ranch in Rainbow, Calif. (619-723-7373). Thank you, Shalom, in advance, for the advice you will be giving to CRFG guava growers.

Sorbs Complete a Portrait of the Artist as an Old Man

Sorbs (*Sorbus domestica*), a pome fruit featured in recent issues of the FRUIT GARDENER and on the front cover of this issue, have many associations with the country life of ancient and medieval Europe. Literature is full of references to them, as are the visual arts, as, for example, in Andrea Mantegna's Saint George (1471).

One famous Irish author's last year was spent in intimacy with sorbs, also known as serviceberry. This is how that year was described in the August 14, 1994 issue of *Le Monde*:

"Shortly after the start of the Second World War, James Joyce went to stay at a hotel in a village near Vichy. He remained there for a year. Over half a century later, some villagers still remember the writer well....

"The Romanesque church would strike noon as Joyce walked back from La Gadine. He would then lunch at the Hotel du Commerce, usually alone. The restaurant, run by the Sarassat family, was famous throughout France for its high-quality cuisine. Its crayfish with champagne, saddle of hare and *millefeuille* pastries were 'worth the detour.'

"Joyce was not interested in such fancy fare. He went there for the local *gnole* [hooch], a serviceberry spirit, no longer made, which only farmers and their animals could stomach. 'When the cows got colic, they were given serviceberry spirit and it got rid of their wind!' says Rene Reviron, now deputy mayor of Saint-Gerand, who remembers seeing Joyce knocking back the fiery spirit well away from Nora's reproving glare."

—C.T. Kennedy