



SUMMER/FALL 2008 NEWSLETTER



News From The Orchard

At our last central SFA meeting, we decided as a board that we should have a newsletter for our members. I thought a column about orchards and the progress of the 100 orchard project would be good. I will write the first one, but I think this should be a conversation, so we will try to create an open forum for questions and comments on orchards and fruit production.

The 100 orchard project put together several grafting and maintenance workshops in the past couple of years. We have sprinkled them around the central Minnesota area and had a good response everywhere we've had these workshops. These workshops were funded in part by a local forester who likes what SFA is doing. In our grafting workshops the participants actually graft several trees to take home. This works at fulfilling one of the goals of our project, which is to get 100 orchards planted. Another goal we have is to find orchards that are already established and show these off to our members. Building a network of successful orchardists meeting with wannabes should make for some success with these goals. We will organize contact information on both of these groups and make it available. This list will also help with marketing in the future, both for buyers and sellers of fruit and nursery stock.

Having fun and getting to know our neighbors with all of these activities is also an important goal.

Some of the challenges we are facing include getting our grafts to take. We are exploring "sweating" our bench grafted trees which involves leaving the grafted trees set in a cool wet dark place until the new wood starts to break bud. We are also looking at some different kinds of grafting. I think we should get good at grafting root stock that is already planted. This way we would get more than one chance to get a good graft. We can also plant rows of the root stock, let it get established, and then graft what we want on it. There is a bud graft that can be done in July on an established tree that some of the orchard owners have told us will grow 6 feet in one year if done right on good root stock.

We have also heard about edible fruit trees that don't need to be grafted. We don't know of any tasty apple trees like this yet, but we have found cherry trees and have heard of some plums that sound good. The Evan cherry that I tasted was full of flavor. Saskatoon's (June) berry bushes sound promising also. Any sprouts that come from these plants can be moved and develop on their own into another tree exactly like its parent. Plants that sprout true to their parents could create their own nursery beds that would go on for as long as some of the plants are left to sprout again.

Designing a farmstead shelterbelt with edible fruit bearing plants on the inside rows seems to be a good idea in a lot of natural resource circles. I think Permaculturists and Agroforesters would call this "stacking" - getting more than one thing done with your efforts. A shelterbelt of

News from the Orchard (continued)



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this kind would save home energy during the winter and add aesthetics, privacy and a cool shady place in the summer. It could also produce firewood, timber and food if the right things are planted in the right places and managed properly

These are just a few of the items we have been working on in the 100 Orchards Project. See you in the orchard! Greg Nolan

Gleaning Firewood from Your Forest

The harvest of firewood should encourage new growth on long lived high value trees whenever possible. I spend time in my forest keeping track of anywhere I have high value natural regeneration. It is a good chore that gets me out in my woods. There is no better teacher for me than the trees. When I can, I concentrate my firewood gathering around these high value seedlings and saplings. The firewood tree doesn't need to be dead. Many times dead trees are high value wildlife trees. I look for trees that don't have much of a future and won't make good wildlife habitat. Sometimes trade-offs need to be made. Two or three large standing wildlife trees per acre is about right. Don't forget the occasional large log on the ground. Sometimes after I cut a tree and see it has heart rot I will abandon it as firewood and create habitat. Old Aspen trees with mushrooms growing on them, old trees with halos of dead limbs around their crowns, and broken tops are examples of trees I might cut. I also look at the natural regeneration I am working with to determine what trees need more sun. Some trees like red oak can get started in low light but need sun at some point or they will perish. Many trees are happiest with lots of sun. The more they have, the more they produce to a certain point. Their crowns are like "solar sails". Cutting holes in your canopy to get sun

into seedlings is called light intensity management.

Hardwood regeneration is a bit easier to cut around, as it doesn't matter if you squash a few seedlings. Hardwood seedlings will sprout from the roots where as a pine tree will die for good if you cut it off or squashed it. You must be a good directional tree faller to work around evergreen seedlings. You also need a good strategy for picking the firewood up and moving it to the wood stove. I use a small four-wheel assist tractor (40 horsepower), with the option of either forks or a bucket on the loader. Sometimes I make block wood right where the tree lies and throw it in the bucket, sometimes I make 8 foot logs and pick them up with the forks. A good trail system in your woods is a must. The extra work that you put into being careful around natural regeneration always pays off in the long run. Well shaped seedling above 4 feet are hard to stop while newly planted seedling have a gauntlet of vectors to escape seedlinghood. I figure an acre of natural regeneration is worth between \$200 and \$400. Probably much more when it is 4 feet plus in height. Firewood is a wonderful product to take from your woods as there always seems to be some improvements that can be made to encourage a vigorous long lived high value forest. Clear the Way!

Submitted by Greg Nolan

SOLAR HOME TOUR DAY

OCTOBER 5 2 PM-5PM at Greg Nolan's and Marcia Rapatz' Home 33334 321st Ave Browerville

Call Marcia and Greg (320 594-6317) for directions if you don't know the way.



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Coloring Book Project Update

The “Annalid and her Friends” coloring book was reprinted thanks to grants from Todd Wadena Electric and Runestone Electric. Over 1000 copies have been distributed to schools throughout the central chapter area during the 2007-2008 school year. We still have 1500 copies, so please contact Sue Peterson if you would like to take some to your local schools.

2008 GRAZEFEST REPORT

Grazefest 2008 took place August 1st and 2nd in Verndale at Kent Solberg’s and Dan Middendorf’s farms. Approximately 110 people attended the 2-day event. The keynote speaker was Joel McNair, editor of Graze magazine, who spoke about what the future might hold for grass-based operations.

Milking parlor tours showing the parlors in operation were conducted on Friday, and tours of both beef and dairy operations were conducted on Saturday. The beef tour was sponsored by the Wadena Soil and Water Conservation District.

A panel dealing with Hot Topics in grazing was held on Friday afternoon, and varying issues were discussed including thistle management, fencing issues, and “stacking” types of livestock on the same pasture.

Workshops included:

- Getting started in grass-based dairies
- Low cost/Low labor dairy components

- Low cost parlor design/New Zealand style swing parlor
- Selling your carbon credits—Dean Current, University of Minnesota
- Forage Production—Craig Schaeffer, University of Minnesota
- Pastured Egg Production—Linda Solberg

100 ORCHARDS PROJECT NURSERY TOUR REPORT

On July 20, a number of SFACM members toured Judy Heiling’s nursery and her Saskatoon (Juneberry) orchard near Randall. She has a huge selection of fruit trees as well as many pretty and hardy perennials. 14 people attended the workshop, and got a chance to see more than ten varieties of Saskatoons growing side by side, and taste each individual variety in order to choose a favorite. Their work was reported in the Greenbook last year, and they are continuing to add varieties and types of trees and shrubs in order to diversify even more.



July 20 2008 Saskatoon Orchard Tour



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7579 St. Mathias Road

PHONE 218-822-3281

FALL FIELD DAY AND 100 ORCHARDS WORKSHOP

On September 13, we are planning a fall field day and 100 Orchards Workshop at The Farm on St Mathias in conjunction with the opening of their Corn Maze. The workshops last from 10AM-4PM. Events include SFA-CM workshops on dripline and mulch installation, small woodlot management, composting, garden layout, and apple variety comparison.

Dr Don Starzinski, MD, PhD, will be speaking on healthy eating and healthy choices at noon. Dr Starzinski has studied both Western and Traditional Chinese Medicine, and has a broad knowledge base from which to share the best of both traditions. Come for a fun and educational day!

Directions to The Farm on St Mathias:

From Brainerd: South Sixth Street past Brainerd Medical Center 1 mile to St. Mathias Road (County Road 21); 3 miles South on St. Mathias Road.

From South of Brainerd: Hwy 371 North to Sleepy Hollow Road (County Road 131). Follow Sleepy Hollow to St. Mathias Road (County Road 21). Turn Left (North) and proceed 1.5 miles to the farm.

Coming North on Hwy 25: Hwy 25 N to Dewing Highway (County Road 2). Left (West) on Dewing Highway to County Road 45. Go Right (North) on County Road 45 to Sleepy Hollow Road (County Road 131). Go Left (West) on Sleep Hollow to St. Mathias Road (County Road 21). Go Right (North) on St. Mathias Road for 1.5 miles.

From Junction of Thiess Road and County Road 45 (the fairgrounds): South on County Road 45 to Cook Wildlife Road; Right on Cook Wildlife Road which will end at St. Mathias Road and the driveway to The Farm on St. Mathias.

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