



LOUISIANA MAYHAW NEWSLETTER

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Notes from the President

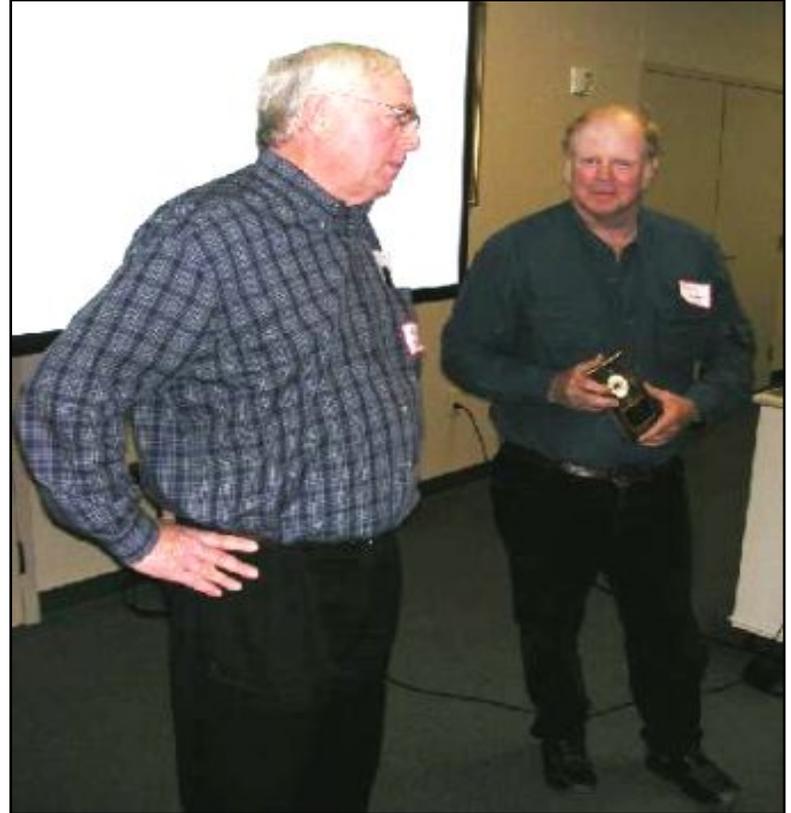
I would like to express my appreciation to everyone who worked and helped to make our eleventh Annual Mayhaw Conference a success. Our attendance was less than in previous years. I thought the program was excellent and really benefited the growers.

Our special thanks to Billy and Gerry Craft who hosted the field day segment of the program at his experimental orchard. Gerry, the mayhaw punch was outstanding.

The growers that are using Agri-Streptomycin should weigh the powder instead of measuring. The powder is light in weight. The recommended measure for fifty gallons is four ounces of powder which is usually eight tablespoons by volume. It will take twenty tablespoons to equal four ounces.

Looking forward to seeing you at our July meeting.

Spec



Billy Craft presenting the T.O. Warren Pioneer Award to Bobby Talbert of Vidor, Texas

Eleventh Annual Mayhaw Conference and Field Day

The L.M.A. chose to meet during bloom stage for the first time in its eleven year history in an effort to avoid conflicts with harvesting.

Former L.M.A. President Billy Craft was instrumental in making arrangements for facilities at the La. Methodist Wesley Center in Woodworth, La. Dr. John Pyzner created another outstanding program for the Conference with informative speakers and timely topics. President Spec Sherrill welcomed everyone and asked Rev. Bubba Hoggatt to open the meeting with prayer.

Bobby Talbert spoke to the group about the establishment of a mayhaw orchard. Bobby prepared the presentation for electronic access and provided hard copies for the attendees, as he has done so many times in the past.

The annual cooking contest was synchronized again this year by Lou Brown of the Rapides Parish Ag-Center Office. The judging was tougher than usual this year. Mrs. Marilyn Lyles of Rayville was awarded "Best of Show".

Donald Ferrin discussed various mayhaw diseases and shared photographs helpful in identifying them. There was a lot of interest in fire blight which has hit a lot of orchards from Texas to Mississippi this year.

One of the Alexandra's TV stations had a camera crew at the conference. They interviewed Billy Craft and filmed the Cooking Contest.

Spec Sherrill discussed his take on the pros and cons of various mayhaw cultivars. Some of his top picks were: Texas Star, Maxine, Georgia Giant, Elite and Red Majesty.

H.W. Jackson shared with the group his experiments with mayhaw tree shakers and harvesting. He is a popular member of the Association and injects a lot of humor in his presentations.

Awards were forwarded in appreciation of service rendered to the L.M.A. to Doug Smith of La. Tech and Dr. Charlie Johnson of LSU. Both of whom were instrumental in making the "mayhaw ice cream project" possible. A certificate of appreciation for past President Leroy Cole was presented to his brother Boyd Cole

There were many door prizes donated for this year's conference. A large number of caps and knives were provided by Swihart Sales of Quinter, Kansas. Mr. Bubba Hoggatt won one of two "old time soda mixers" from the L.M.A. Ferrin Construction donated a very nice cutting board that was won by Lynn Baham. A number of T-shirts with the L.M.A. logo were provided by Mayberry Orchards. Boyd Cole won a Golden Farris seedling from Elmer Langston and Shirley Lord won an embroidered shirt crafted by Mrs. Marylin Lyles of Rayville.

The L./M.A. Constitution was revised by unanimous vote to allow out of state members to serve as "members-at-large on the L.M.A. Board.

Charlie Hutchins was elected to serve as member-at-large and Board members Bubba Hoggatt and James Eaves were re-elected.

The 2006 "T.O. Warren Pioneer Award" was presented to Bobby Talbert of Vidor, Texas by Committee chairman Billy Craft. Leroy Cole and Jerry Iverson were co-chairmen.

After a wonderful luncheon, most of the attendees drove to the home of Billy Craft in Woodworth where more door prizes were provided. Billy and John McLure conducted tours of their respective orchards. Later some joined Spec Sherrill and Rafash Brew for grafting instructions despite extremely cold temperatures.

Many members commented that they were looking forward to meeting at the Methodist Center again at a future conference.



Some of the attendees sampling the goodies from the cooking contest.



John McLure, Billy Craft and Bobby Talbert (left to right) Bobby assisted with the walking seminar and is shown here sharing his expertise in pruning.

Setting up a Mayhaw Orchard

Bobby M. Talbert
March 2006

Setting up an orchard can be just a few trees in your yard or planting several acres for commercial production. I will cover the first part of this article for the small home grower and follow up with some requirements for a larger commercial orchard.



If you already grow fruit trees in your yard, you should have no problem growing mayhaw trees. The only exception would be pear trees. They sometimes have a problem with fire blight which can carry over to mayhaw trees. If you are planting some around your yard, you should try and give them as much sun as possible. If shade might be a problem, try to make it in the later afternoon. Morning sun works best on all fruit trees. Mayhaw trees can grow in most soils.

A pH of 6 to 6.5 works best. They do not have to be planted in a low area or wet spot. Tree spacing may vary, but I do not recommend any closer than 20 feet apart. After you plant the young trees, keep them staked straight for at least the first 3 years. Remove all lower growth and sprouts that may appear. It is best to keep the grass removed from around the trees for at least the first three years. Later as the trees develop a stronger, deeper root system, they can tolerate the grass as long as it is kept mowed. Spraying the trees will be necessary to control insects and diseases. If you already spray fruit trees in your yard, spraying mayhaw trees will be similar. Your local agriculture agent can help you with this. Spraying schedules vary with the variety of mayhaw trees, current weather conditions, and what stage of growth your trees are in. The insect that can give you the most problem is the plum curculio. This weevil feeds on the green fruit and cuts a crescent shaped cut where it lays a single egg. Once this egg is inside the fruit, control is almost impossible. This larva feeds on the inside of the fruit, and they can infest an entire tree. Spraying when most blooms are gone and following up about 2 weeks later can get good control. When in your orchard, look for berries that seem to be ripening ahead of the main crop. This could be an indicator of berries that are infected with the curculios.

There are other insects that are more of a problem in a home orchard than trees grown in an open field. We grew mayhaw trees around our home putting them in different situations to monitor the trees progress. The insects that gave us more problems in the yard than in the field, were the Tent Caterpillars and Woolly Apple Aphid. This was because these insects are in the native trees surrounding the property. They just naturally migrate to the fruit trees. This makes control a little harder. Squirrels can be a problem also. They feed on the developing mayhaws.

Watering your trees will be necessary at some point in time. Even a small home orchard needs some type of water source. It is a fairly simple task to set up an irrigation system with drip emitters. Some growers run the main lines on top of the ground, others bury the lines. I prefer to bury the main line and branch off of it with small tubing and a drip emitter. Having water available can be the difference in having a good crop or hardly any crop at all. Water is very critical when the trees are young. If they get off to a slow start, they may never recover. As the trees get older they can tolerate dry conditions better, but may still be stressed out. The majority of all water that a tree uses is evaporated through its leaves, [Transpiration]. This has a cooling affect and a very small amount is used for photosynthesis. The trees own self preservation comes first. When it is stressed for water the first thing that will happen is photosynthesis will slow or completely stop. [This may affect next year's crop] The next thing that will happen is it will begin to shed its leaves. The next phase will be a die back of the most extreme branches. At this point it is still possible to salvage the tree but it has been set back years. Older mayhaw trees seldom reach this last phase, but newly planted trees are more susceptible to drought conditions. So when you look out at your orchard is it just surviving or is it thriving?

Fertilize newly planted mayhaw trees very lightly. What we do is use time release fertilizer tablets that are rated to feed the tree for the first two years. When we plant the tree, we put 3 tablets around the tree after 2/3 of the soil has been put back in around the root ball. We water these new trees with root stimulator. When you fertilize your trees with granular fertilizer, broadcast it around the tree at the drip line. The drip line is where the outer portions of the scaffold limbs reach. You can use a balanced fertilizer or fine tune this to fit your orchards needs. The old rule for this is 1 pound per inch of trunk diameter. I split this into two applications, mid March and at the end of April. The reason for this is part of the fertilizer will be available during fruit development and the rest will be available to the tree when the summer growth starts.

As a special note; the best time to transplant a mayhaw tree is in November. Do not use any commercial fertilizer. Only use root stimulator. You should remove part of the top to balance out the loss in the root structure during the transplant phase. This is removing a portion of its limb structure. This is called thinning cuts. Thinning cuts are cutting a branch back to where it starts. Do not use heading cuts. Heading cuts means cutting a branch at some point other than where it starts. What heading cuts do is to promote a possible flush of new growth the next spring. On a transplanted tree this flush of growth can stress out the tree with its reduced root structure. What you want to do is start new root growth first and then as the tree begins to recover, start to fertilize it lightly. Foliar feeding works well also. We have done this on very large mayhaw trees, and they were back up into full production in 3 years.

Setting up Larger Orchards

Setting up a larger orchard needs to be planned out. Make sure that your area that you live in will not be a problem in growing mayhaw trees. Lots of cedar trees in your area can be a major problem creating apple cedar rust spores. Spraying a fungicide will help with control. Fire blight from nearby pear trees or other mayhaw trees might present a problem. If deer is a problem in your area, fencing might be required. If the land you plan to put in an orchard is very low, it will cause harvesting, and orchard management problems. Research the mayhaw varieties that have been working the best, especially in your area. They all have their good points and bad points. Decide how large you want your orchard to be. Now this might sound like an obvious decision but it is very important to understand the level of management that is required as orchard size goes up. There is a point where you can operate a small orchard with your existing yard maintenance equipment. This might be up to a couple of acres. A riding lawnmower and a small 12 volt sprayer would be the bulk of your equipment. As the acreage goes up, so does the equipment requirements. Now you are up to a tractor, and at least a sprayer running off of a tractor pto. What this jump means is that you will have to grow more mayhaw trees just to offset your increased overhead. As the orchard becomes larger so does the equipment needed for maintaining it. If you already have some of this equipment on hand then this makes it more economical to increase the size of your orchard. The same equipment needed to do 10 acres can just as easily do 20 acres.

Tree spacing should be between 20 and 30 feet. This is what ever you prefer. I started out at 30x30 spacing, but after growing them for a number of years I realized that this spacing could come down to at least 25x25. If you plan on eventually doing mechanical harvesting you will need this spacing for equipment maneuvering.

Some people lay out their field with the trees running in straight rows lined up with each other. I prefer to use staggered rows. This puts the trees at maximum distance from each other and allows for better sunlight penetration. One mistake that I often see is orchards that are set up without enough turning radius for equipment at the end of the rows. Tractors with large mowers attached should have 35 to 45 feet for turning into the next row. What this means is if you have a fence or other obstacle at the end of your field, start your rows to give your equipment enough room to turn. Remember your trees will eventually expand to take up some of this space.

Some orchards are set up on raised beds. I personally do not do this because it interferes with our special orchard mowers. There are two ways to make raised beds, one is just on the tree itself and the other is to make a long continuous raised bed. The problem with a long continuous bed is that it tends to block off the natural drainage of the field. Another problem with raised beds is the soil tends to erode off of it exposing the roots. When this happens they usually start to form root suckers that have to be continually trimmed off. When we first plant new mayhaw trees we make a small bed with a concave center for watering purposes. Later we totally do away with it. Mayhaw trees grow just fine on flat ground.

Train and trim your trees to a single trunk. Keep them staked straight for the first few years. Remove any dead branches as they appear. Keep lower growth removed. As the tree grows taller, gradually remove lower scaffold limbs until they reach at least 3 to 4 foot from the ground. This will make harvesting and tree maintenance easier. After we started mechanical harvesting we found out a 4 foot scaffold height worked best for us. Training scaffold limbs to at least 45 degree angles will increase production considerably. The tree trained to a modified central leader system worked best for us in our orchard.

Sunscald on young mayhaw trees can be a problem. We had some problems with this when we first started planting mayhaw trees. Sunscald happens more often on the lower trunks of the trees, but can also be in the upper limb structure that is exposed to direct sunlight in the middle of the day. Once the wood tissue has been damaged by sunscald wood borers will often enter this area. They can do extreme damage to the tree. We started experimenting with painting the tree trunks with flat white interior latex paint. We thinned it down with water. This is 2 parts paint to 1 part water. This worked very well. We even had good results on new trees just planted right out of the nursery. Only trees up to about 3 years old need sunscald protection. By 4 years old the bark has become thick enough to resist sunscald. There are also commercially available trunk protectors. These also help prevent animal and mechanical damage to the trunks.

Use an herbicide to keep the grass and weeds under control in your orchard. On large orchards it is a common practice to spray the ground with a continuous pattern all the way down the row. In a small orchard, you can spray to about 4 foot diameter. Depending on tree size, this would increase.

Other spraying maintenance would be:

1. Spraying for lichen or tuft moss.
2. Spraying an oil dormant spray for scale, mites, aphids, ect.
3. Spraying a fungicide for cedar rust, ect.
4. Spraying for fire blight control.
5. Spraying for general insect control [including fire ants.]

I did not get into what chemicals to spray or when. There is too much variability with spray schedules, and chemicals. Your spray schedule would have to be worked out to where you live, and the cycle your trees are in. I can tell you now, the day you spray on will change from year to year. Your local agricultural agent would be more qualified to suggest what chemicals to use.

Your trees will start to produce berries maybe the next year, but good crops will not be produced until about 4 to 5 years in the field. It will be hard to judge the production of the trees until they settle down in their growth patterns. On the large orchard we planted we saw a great deal of variability on production rates on the same variety of mayhaw tree. [This was due to its current location, soil classification and tree structure.] In the early years this totally misleads us. We have trees out producing the others 3 to 1, and others doing nothing at all. This is all on the same variety of trees. Part of this was due to the tree structure. We found out if we could control limb angles we could greatly increase production rates. So we started doing intense pruning and training on all our trees. Production soared, but there were still others that did almost nothing. What we noticed was that the trees that had poor production were some of the best looking trees. These trees had two things in common. 1. They were all in an area where the ground had a higher moisture content because of a slight depression. 2. They were in an area that had old burn pile locations and the top soil was the deepest. This made an extremely fertile area. What this meant is the trees had it to good. They did not need to make fruit they were growing to well.

Actually fruit trees produce fruit best when they are slightly stressed. Once this was figured out the only thing to do was wait. We could have root pruned these trees to slow them down but we decided not to. Just keep these trees pruned and maintained, their day will come. Do not fertilize. When a fruit tree happens to be in this certain situation it will eventually come into balance with its environmental condition. What happens is the tree will reach a size when it will need more than the soil it is in can supply. When this happens the slight stress factor kicks in.

These trees will be some of your best producers for many years. Mine have done this. To see them would just blow you away! Jerry Iverson has a large photo of one such tree with my wife standing by this tree on his wall. To me that is a compliment.

Markets are still being developed for mayhaws, and mayhaw products, and this looks like a continuing trend for some time.

Harvesters are still being refined and new ideas for different types of tree shakers are still being introduced. We still have a ways to go, but I think we are headed in the right direction. There are a lot of good people working on this.

Have a good day!

Bobby M. Talbert- 409-7450706

bobtalbert@direcway.com

FOR SALE_

One slightly blighted G-5 mayhaw tree. If you don't like this one, I have about 500 more to choose from. Take your pick. If you don't like G-5, then I have plenty of Texas Stars on hand. I'm sure you can find one with just the right amount of blight.

Folks, blight is a very bad problem on my farm this year. I know every one has also had the same trouble, but I hope not like I have.

I have looked at every web site on the internet that might have something that will help. Folks, there are just no answers out there. Everything I find is pre-blight measures. There is not much for post blight treatments. The standard (cut it out and burn it) just will not work. The tree would have to be cut at ground level.

It may be this was just a bad year for blight and next year things will not be as bad. There is not much else that can be done except to wait and see.

Thanks for listening. I needed a shoulder to cry on. I hope all of you have a good summer and hope to see you at the LMA meeting next year.

Bill Jackson

JACKSON FRUIT FARM



Fireblight, Quince Rust and Plum Curculio

By Billy R. Craft

Each year seems to bring new challenges to growing quality mayhaw fruit. As most of you have already experienced, the first few years of growing mayhaws is usually not plagued with many serious problems. But when any fruit bearing trees are placed in orchard situations, problems with insects, fungi, rust, etc. seem to magnify.

This year was an especially bad year for infestations of fireblight and quince rust. Plum curculio infestations do not fluctuate as much because their numbers are not as environmentally dependent, such as weather conditions.

Most growers are using NOVA for controlling quince rust. It is very effective when used timely and at correct rates. I've had 99+% control by spraying: (1) first spray the last week of February (2) then 3 more sprays about 7 to 10 days apart depending on rainfall. Red cedar trees are the main source of spores that infest the mayhaws. However, mayhaws and other hawthorns become infested on the fruit, leaves and limbs when not sprayed and a source of spores is nearby. A strong, secondary flush of spores (orange-yellow dust-like) occurs again in late May and June. So, if you have a neighbor with an infestation of quince rust or a wooded area with native hawthorns, additional sprays with NOVA will be necessary.

Fireblight is the number one problem facing mayhaw growers. This year was above average in severity of infestations. Agricultural Streptomycin has been used for years on pears and apples. Louisiana will probably get approval this year for use of Ag Streptomycin on mayhaws.

Use of Ag Streptomycin and changing the use of certain fertilizers will have a major positive effect on reducing fireblight problems. Intense spraying is required when using Ag. Streptomycin. Mayhaws will have to be sprayed about every 5 days during the bloom period. It is very critical to spray during the bloom period when bees and flies are visiting the blooms for nectar.

Also, the complete elimination of nitrogen fertilizer is also beneficial in reducing fireblight. Use only phosphorus and potash. Apply both phosphorus and potash in late August or early September. Broadcast under the entire limb canopy with emphasis toward the outer edges of the limbs (drip line).

Mayhaws grafted on dwarfing rootstock are not as susceptible to fireblight due to their slower growth rate. Some selections are also more resistant than others. Some of the best mayhaw selections for fruit production, holding capacity, uniform ripening and late blooming are very susceptible to fireblight. Royal Star and Red Majesty are two examples. Two selections in my orchard that have fairly good resistance to fireblight are Maxine and E-2 (Red Splendor). But, a spray program and fertilizer management are going to be necessary to successfully grow mayhaws in the majority of situations.

Some growers get heavy infestations of fireblight and do not take the #1 corrective measure of removing all of the infested spurs and limbs. I realize with several acres, this is a formidable task. However, if infested branches are not removed from the orchard the infestation in subsequent years will intensify and trees will become severely stressed and some die. At some point of infestation, the best alternative is to remove the trees. That is hard to do!

Plum curculio can be controlled using Malathion and/or Asana. Both are good insecticides. Begin spraying when they first appear (right at fruit set). Spray about 7 days apart for about 3 weeks. New growers should be informed by the Board of Directors, nurserymen and extension personnel that an intense spray program will be necessary to successfully grow quality mayhaws.

Blue Cheese Thumbprints

1 (4 ounce) packages crumbled blue cheese
½ cup butter, softened
1 1/3 cups all-purpose flour
1 ½ tablespoons poppy seeds
¼ teaspoon ground red pepper
1 cup mayhaw jelly

Beat blue cheese and butter at medium speed with an electric mixer until fluffy. Add flour, poppy seeds, and red pepper, beating just until combined. Roll dough into ¾ inch round balls; cover and chill 2 hours. Arrange balls on ungreased baking sheet, and press thumb into each ball of dough, leaving an indentation.

Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes or until golden. Remove from oven and put 1/3 to 1/2 teaspoon jelly in each indentation. Return to oven and bake about five minutes longer. Transfer to wire racks to cool completely.

*Marilyn Lyles
Rayville, La.*

Watch for more great recipes in future newsletters and on our web site at www.mayhaw.org
If you have not paid your 2006 dues (\$15.00), please remember that the Association needs your support. If you have paid your dues, thank you. If you have something you would like to contribute to the newsletter mail it the address below or send to mayhaw@bellsouth.net. Thanks to Billy Craft, Bobby Talbert and Bill Jackson for their continuing support and contributions to this newsletter.

Louisiana Mayhaw Association
P.O. Box 382
Jackson, La. 70748