



# LOUISIANA MAYHAW ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

### Changes to website

The LMA Board voted to make changes to the "Where to Buy" page at [mayhaw.org](http://mayhaw.org). The format change will facilitate easier access to customers looking for specific products. Also, this will allow more types of products to be advertised. The membership dues and website dues will be effective January 1 each year, starting January 1, 2015. Membership dues are \$20/year. Website dues with one product advertised is \$20/year. For each additional product advertised, a fee of \$10 will be added. Maintaining a quality website which provides valuable information and reaches so many potential buyers is not cheap. [Mayhaw.org](http://Mayhaw.org) continues to be the leading site on the internet to sell mayhaw products. It is planned that the new format will allow the customer to choose the grower/seller nearest them and allow sellers to have their own page linked if they choose.

### Looking Back at 2014

Over the past calendar year, interest in mayhaw products has continued to increase. Demand for fruit driven by the shortage of 2013 has not abated with the unusually high yields of 2014. Demand is now driven by several factors. First, fear of another fruit shortage has prompted many fruit buyers to purchase more than usual, as their demand for product (jelly) increased due to public awareness of the past shortage. Several of these fruit buyers started their own orchards.

Second, the shortage of 2013 raised awareness of the mayhaw. Sometimes people fail to notice something until it is not there. Awareness of a shortage not only affected usual buyers, but it created interest from people previously unaware of the magnificent mayhaw. Third, awareness has ignited creative minds. Several new products are now being offered, or are in the process of reaching new markets. These markets, will require mayhaws as they now require such fruits as apple, raspberry and pomegranate. One new member offering a new mayhaw product has contributed an article for this newsletter. Be sure to read his story. This past year, we have seen the Mayhaw established as the State Fruit Tree of Louisiana. This is a huge public relations victory for that underdog fruit tree from the wrong side of the swamp. This Act, on the part of our Legislators, recognizes the Mayhaw for its uniqueness, its incomparable flavor, and the great importance it has had in the culture of the state of Louisiana and throughout the South. The Mayhaw has been as prominent in the lives of Southerners as any single thing which can come to mind. The childhood experiences, including family outings to harvest from "our favorite tree" color so many memories a Mayhaw red. My sister asked, "Is that old tree still on the creek branch behind Aunt Verna's?" I tell her, "No, but I've planted new ones there."

It's been a good year for the Mayhaw and we've been blessed as well. It's time to look forward to the new year.



*(LMA Annual Conference 2014, L to R: Don Lord, Arnold Baham, James Eaves, Johnny Smith, Charlie Hutchins, Bill Jackson)*

### **Looking ahead at 2015**

Demand for Mayhaw products will continue to be high in the coming year. This is not a prediction, it's just simply the facts. Regardless of world peace or economic upheaval, the craving of the sweet-tooth will not be denied. As new products emerge and are produced, more fruit will be needed.

Sadly, some of the pioneer growers, operating fairly substantial Mayhaw orchards have passed away. In some cases, there is no one interested, or capable of managing the operation they left behind. Demand in the geographic areas of these orchards is reaching into surrounding areas, putting pressure on those growers. As trees mature in newer orchards, demand will be there. Our "Where to Buy" page at [mayhaw.org](http://mayhaw.org) is the engine to move your product. ~

### **Mayhaw Selections – Which Ones Should I Plant?**

by Billy Craft

God created the mayhaw and other fruit trees on the third day. All mayhaw enthusiasts are certainly grateful for the third day of creation. Mayhaws are a tough, "survivor-type" plant withstanding bulldozers clearing land, draglines draining swamps and residential development all across the southeastern USA.

In recent years, mayhaw orchards have "sprung up" throughout Louisiana and

nearly all southeastern states which have historically had mayhaws in the wild. J.S. Akin from Sibley, Louisiana was the early pioneer in Louisiana who recognized the potential of producing mayhaws in an orchard setting. The growth of orchards has steadily increased in recent years in Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. The demand for trees, jelly, juice and other mayhaw products has reached a fever pitch. The website of the Louisiana Mayhaw Association has been a great asset for all producers of mayhaw products.

Potential growers are doing their research on which mayhaw selections to plant in new orchards. New growers should visit with established growers, especially during the fruiting season, to get firsthand information. When researching mayhaw selections, the following are some items for consideration:

1. Productivity
2. Fruit retention capability (shatter resistance)
3. Disease Resistance
4. Blooming date – avoid early bloomers
5. Fruit color – dark red is preferred
6. Tree growth pattern – upright growth versus more horizontal limb growth
7. Spur development density

Following is a list of some excellent selections to consider. All mayhaw growers have their opinions of what constitutes a good mayhaw. This varies a great deal. The selections we have at present are far superior to what we had 15 years ago. Over time, newer selections may be superior to what we have at present. Data is based on Central Louisiana conditions.

**Surprise** – A recent selection resulting from a cross between Double GG and Maxine. It is the latest bloomer at present, with the peak of bloom occurring during the first week in April. It is also late in fruit ripening, with peak

### **Mayhaw Selections** (continued)

occurring the first week of June. The tree is very productive with red fruit. Fruit size averages .75 inch. This is a good selection due to its late blooming when cold damage is highly unlikely. It has good horizontal limb growth, with dense fruiting spurs. Shatter resistance is good with uniform fruit ripening.

**Maxine** – A James Eaves selection from near DeRidder, Louisiana. James named this tree after his late wife – Maxine. The Maxine selection has proven to be an excellent producer in all orchards where it has been planted. It is a late bloomer, with peak blooming occurring in late March. Fruit ripening occurs in late May. The fruit color is red and averages .8 inch. Maxine is very fire blight resistant. It has good horizontal limb growth. It is also the champion on thorn production.



*(Billy Craft displaying the fruit of a young Red Champ selection)*

**Red Champ** – is a recent selection resulting from a cross between Maxine and Double GG. It has all the good characteristics mentioned earlier in the article. It is an excellent selection having a shiny, dark red fruit averaging .85 inch. Peak of blooming is about March 20th with peak of ripening about May 20<sup>th</sup>. Disease resistance is good. Year after year, it is the healthiest looking tree in my orchard, with dark green leaves with a resistance to leaf fungi. Fruit is shatter resistant, with uniform ripening. Ninety percent of the fruit can be harvested with one shaking.

The limbs have a good horizontal growth pattern.

**Double GG** – is a cross between Texas Star and Royal Star. Bobby Talbert selected Texas Star and Royal Star from a wild stand near Gist, Texas. Bobby generously shared grafting wood with me. Double GG has a dark red fruit averaging .75 inch. The fruit is shatter resistant with fairly good uniform ripening. It is very productive. Blooming peak is about March 10<sup>th</sup> with peak fruit ripening about May 10<sup>th</sup>. The tree has the best growth form of any tree I have tested. It has some susceptibility to fire blight, but can easily be controlled with the new chemicals currently available. It produces very few thorns.

New orchard plantings should contain two or more selections for good pollination. Mayhaws have self-fertile flowers, but have weak pollen or low viability. Rows in the orchard should be alternated with two or more selections to maximize pollination. Honey bees, orchard bees and the American hover fly are the primary insects important in mayhaw pollination. ~

### **The Mayhaw Calendar**

It's now approaching mid-December during a relatively mild winter – so far. Why, you might ask, should I be thinking about the orchard? Well, it's a good time to take a break from the Christmas shopping and get in the orchard to see what is going on. A lot has changed in the last 30 – 45 days. For one thing, all of the limbs should be bare of leaves. Your trees should now be dormant, although the mild temperatures may cause swelling of buds in some early, sensitive selections. Now is the time to prune. Remove the interior crossing limbs, train those which want to join their neighbor and curb some of that leggy growth some selections are good at. Cutting those back will encourage branching and increase production. From November until January is a good time to add lime where needed. Also, drenching of soil

## **Mayhaw Calendar** (continued)

with treatment for insects is done during this time. I plan to do a drench in January to battle borers and plum curculio. Now is the time to transplant new trees when adding to the orchard, or replacing low production trees. I will close-plant several Red Champs, Maxines and Surprises and allow them to grow over the next couple of years. I can then move them (at this time of the year) into open spaces where trees are needed. Late December is the time to collect graft wood, or scion wood. Grafting in the greenhouse can be done in mid- January and outdoor grafting in late March. Before I get into March grafting, I have to consider February. Early February, when buds are ready to burst open, a spray schedule begins to prevent fire blight, rust and insects. I will probably spray three times about five days apart, as blooming occurs. This spray schedule is not a sure-fire, foolproof system, as most of my systems are not. Sometimes it needs to be earlier, or later. Sometimes three sprayings are not enough and sometimes five days should be three or seven. Sometimes all three problems are sprayed for and sometimes only one or two at a time. March and April are busy times for first grafting, and then preparing for fruit ripening in late April. I have some "natives" (un-grafted trees), along with a few early ripening Marline selections which come in around April 21st-23<sup>rd</sup>. When that begins, it will be harvest every day until sometime in late June when Cajun finally ripens. It usually goes like this: Marline and Natives, then Spectacular, Royalty, Texas Star and Royal Star coming in roughly the same time, then Double G, Red Splendor, Abundance, Red Champ, Maxine and finally Cajun. It looks like we will fit Surprise in between Maxine and Cajun in years to come. Last year it was nearly July when we finished. Late July to early August is fertilization time. Sometimes I split the amount and put out half the amount in late January (before spraying) and the other half in early August. Then all I

have to do in September and October is rest. Right! ~

## **Observations of a Brown Thumbed Mayhaw Neophyte.**

By Phillip Lefevre

We became interested in Mayhaws, as seemingly many people did, when the crop failed a couple of years ago. We own a restaurant that uses Mayhaw Jelly as a base for a popular dipping and marinade sauce. I had no idea what Mayhaw berries even looked like, but we do own a small orchard of Mexican Plum trees that we had never bothered to use and, as a last resort, we tried making jelly from these as a blend to supplement the small supply of Mayhaw Jelly we still had. This became the start of our Mayhaw voyage. Mayhaw makes great jelly and has the potential to make, or be a part of, many other things ranging from juice to ice-cream and, of course, our own dipping sauce. So, why aren't there huge orchards like we see with grapes, almonds, olives, etc.? If it is such a great product, why are there no large producers?

I am not sure if there is a clear answer to this. It is possible they are hard to grow outside the Southeast growing area - we are testing that by growing them in central Texas. It is also possible that they are not sufficiently productive in comparison to other crops to be commercially viable - product development is usually demand driven and perhaps there isn't sufficient demand?

However, it is also possible that it is a fruit that has fallen between the cracks. Mayhaw is well known in "the Old South" but little heard of elsewhere. Seemingly, and this is my theory, experimental hybridization of Mayhaw Trees only started in the 1980's, which in the sequence of time is not that long ago. The people who took an interest, and some are founders of the Louisiana Mayhaw Association, took an interest from an intellectual perspective and not

## Observations (continued)

a financial one - their focus was on developing a better and more resilient tree and not on how rich they could become. As a result, the market developed as a niche market based on small growers supplying product for local consumers rather than on a large scale basis. The cycle of those intellectual growers is unfortunately now coming to an end. Most growers are in their seventies and they no longer have the time or interest to develop Mayhaw on a large scale basis and now is the time for the Mayhaw market to decide if it can compete with Cranberries, etc., or if it should stay as a specialty niche fruit.

We are taking a hard look at the potential and to a degree we have a good start because we are our own consumer - for us the jury is still out. Based on our very limited knowledge, for what it is worth, here are some thoughts:

1. Do not get into the business if you are looking to just make jelly, unless it is a labor of love. You will be competing with a large number of small growers who are in their seventies and are happy just to keep busy and break even. At the going price of \$5 for an eight ounce jar there is no profit!

2. Most Mayhaw growers have a few trees, some have several hundred, but you can count on one hand the ones that have a thousand or more. It takes several years to get a tree to be commercially productive and owning thousands of trees, based on an unproven market, is risky. So, either get into it for pleasure, or plan on growing at least ten thousand trees - at least that is my estimate of the minimum number it will take to be commercially viable. *(Editor's note: Phillip looks at business on a fairly large-scale.)*

If you do decide to become a grower and based on our mistakes here are some things NOT to do:

Make sure you buy trees from an accredited supplier - and the Louisiana Mayhaw Association can help you here. The first batch of "trees" we bought

arrived looking like twigs. I can assure you the survival rate of twigs is low and you are going to have to wait around seven years to see any fruit.

The second batch of "trees" came from a large nursery in Georgia. These were all "5 - 7 foot" trees. A good number of them came with a heavy infestation of Quince Rust and Fire Blight. To make matters worse it will be a year or two before we find out if they are real Mayhaws or a poor Hawthorne cousin. Your best bet is to visit the growers, see their trees and get to know them. They are an eclectic bunch of people who are, in the main, very nice and more than willing to share their knowledge. It will be another year or two before we decide if we want to grow more than we consume. For that to happen, Mayhaw trees need to be resilient to Texas heat and drought and to my brown thumbs. If I can grow them, anyone can. My instinct is that the holy grail is a Mayhaw Bush rather than a Tree that can allow for the easy application of fungicides and mechanized harvesting. When anyone finds that please call me as I will be more than happy to buy as many trees as possible! In the meantime, when or if my twigs grow up, I will be in my seventies and will be more than happy to sell my jelly for \$5 a jar and there will be lots of folk like me, but we will have a good time doing so and will hope to keep meeting some of the great Mayhaw people with great minds like ours!



*Phillip Lefevre, has Ransom's Steakhouse in beautiful Montgomery Texas, markets Ransom's Mayhaw Jelly, Pickle Peppers and*



## Observations (continued)

*a very unique and palate-pleasing Mayhaw Salad Dressing and Dipping Sauce- individually or in an attractive gift box set. You can visit his website at: RansomsSteakHouse.com.*

### Quality over Quantity

I think anyone bothering to take the time to read this newsletter is someone who agrees that the mayhaw fruit/flavor/jelly, etc. is a unique, premium food item. It may be correctly identified as a gourmet quality product. As such, it should be handled and processed using the highest quality standards to insure the highest quality product is achieved.



James Eaves with his award winning jellies and syrup taking first place in 2014 at the Beauregard Parish Fair.

Today, we have more efficient tools and methods to attain this higher level of quality. As stated earlier in this newsletter, higher quality trees are now available, producing higher quality fruit, which equates to a higher quality juice. The quality of the product you produce depends on the quality of the juice you derive from your fruit. That's pretty much what it boils down to (pun intended). Today we have advanced steamers, refractometers, fruit presses

and other devices to expertly extract and measure the quality of what we are extracting.



Refractometer / Brix meter used to measure the brix of fruit juice.

The higher the brix level is, the higher the level of dissolved sucrose, fructose, vitamins, minerals, amino acids, proteins and other good stuff your juice has to make your product taste better and be better for you. So, like James pictured opposite, imagine your product is being judged each time a jar is opened. Will you win the blue ribbon?



**Leave with a Laugh** (yeah I know it's corny)

**The Mayhaw Man**  
by Johnny Smith

As I flip through the channels on my television, I am amazed at all of the programs where people are looking for big hairy monsters. They have Mountain Monsters, Mothman, Finding Bigfoot, Swamp Creature, Trail of the Skunk Ape, Messing with Bigfoot... the list goes on. Shucks, I could tell them where he's at. He's down on Bearhead Creek, eating mayhaws. Everyone in our neck of the woods knows the legend. Small children are taught at an early age

### **The Mayhaw Man** (continued)

where they can go and where not to go. Strange occurrences have been attributed to the great hairy ape-man for years. Just the other day, my wife Deb looked up from under a hanging limb in the mayhaw patch and said, "Who drank my coke, I just set it down here?" I looked around with a wide-eyed, fearful, but knowing expression and whispered, "the Mayhaw Man!" Deb didn't seem too impressed with this well thought out and highly educated guess, but then she wasn't raised around Bearhead swamp, either. And so the story goes....

and for the life of me, I can't understand why Miss Verdie Mae Daftwert would be out in the swamp alone picking mayhaws in her condition. Miss Verdie Mae suffered from a condition known as strabismus. Besides that, she was as cross-eyed as a bat and danged-near as near-sighted as one to boot. Often, Miss Verdie would be looking right at you and speaking to you, when all the time you thought she was talking to the fellow across the road. You couldn't look Miss Verdie in the eye and tell a lie. It just wasn't possible. At any rate, that's what she was doing, picking mayhaws, all alone in "the mayhaw flat" along the edge of Bearhead Swamp that fateful Saturday morning.

That Saturday, Elvie "Bud" Jerkins was celebrating the promotion he'd received at the Bug Tussle Saw Mill the day before. Bud was a big bear of a man, with dark, forbidding bushy brows and, generally looking, pretty much forbidding and bushy all over. For all of his dark, fierce countenance, Bud Elvie, as he was affectionately called, had a heart of gold. That morning he had hitched a ride to the big town of DeQuincy and bought himself a brand new pair of overalls at the Nichols Dry Goods store. These were genuine OshKosh B'gosh overalls and Bud Elvie was hurrying home to impress his wife, Miss Haddie with them. Bud had just stopped near the mayhaw flat along Bearhead and began changing behind a

convenient bushy shrub. He later recalled having an uneasy feeling come over him, as if he was not alone. He had shrugged off the feeling as he shucked his brogans and old duds and raised up near the shrub. That's when it happened. He felt the piercing claw of the beast grab his backside, causing him to scream in pain and fear.

Miss Verdie said she had just straightened up from picking mayhaws and was holding the small of her back wondering what that horrible skunk-like smell was. That's when it happened! A blood-curdling scream emanated from the right of her, shattering the stillness of the calm Spring morning and sending icy shivers of terror up her spine. Not wanting to, but forcing herself anyway, she looked to where the sound came from. An apparition far exceeding her worst nightmares met her view. A great, towering, dark and hairy creature standing upright thrashed and bellowed in rage not fifty feet from her. The creature she described later was obviously one and the same as the creature we know today as Bigfoot. However, in those days, folks didn't know a lot of scientific names like we do now. The creatures were simply referred to as Wild Men, or sometimes Booger Man. Apparently, some study of the creatures was made by the locals for them to know that they often picked their noses. However, after this dreadful day, whispers of "The Mayhaw Man" would bring chills to the bravest hearts and change the behavior of wayward young'uns for generations to come. "Better be good or the Mayhawman'll getcha."

Anyway, back to Miss Verdie. She stated she screamed at this point, flinging her berries in the air as she raised her arms, crying out, "Mayhaw Man!" She then fled for her life, hearing thrashing, splashing and heavy breathing closing in on her as the beast took chase. She later stated, "I thought I was a goner for sure" because her brogans soon filled with mud and water, tiring her to exhaustion,

### **The Mayhaw Man (continued)**

as if she had lead weights attached to her ankles. She recalled that she didn't see the bluff bank of Bearhead Creek until it was too late, tripping over a root and going headlong into the muddy creek ten feet below. At this point she knew it was over and just prayed for a quick ending. Then, to her amazement, the beast flew past overhead, clearing the twenty foot span between the bluff banks like it was a nothing. She later said she was truly blessed by falling in the creek without the creature seeing her. It obviously thought she had continued on and ran for some distance in that direction before realizing it had lost her trail. Miss Verdie dragged herself in her muddy, ankle-length skirt out of the creek and made a respectable dash in the opposite direction to a neighbor's house at the top of the hill to sound the alarm. Soon, menfolk from the surrounding community were summoned and a hunting party headed up by the famous old woodsman, Clam Sweaty, was formed to comb the woods for the creature.

Bud later testified to the fact that the creature had attacked him from behind with its piercing claws and even offered to show the marks, but no one seemed to want to view this critical forensic evidence. He stated, as the creature attacked him from behind, causing him to howl in pain, he saw Miss Verdie over there looking with horror at something above and behind him over his left shoulder. He stated he could only imagine, from her expression, the terrible beast which was about to devour him. He said he ran in the direction Miss Verdie took, thinking he could surely outrun her when he realized she must have turned off somewhere. He stated he was too terrified to look back, but just crossed the creek as fast as he could and headed home as fast as his legs would carry him. Bud's wife, Miss Haddie, didn't let Bud go off by himself for years afterwards.

Although the hunters searched far and wide, nothing was ever found but a few fifteen inch bare footprints left by the creature, some new overalls hanging on a mayhaw limb and one Nichols Dry Goods receipt for \$7.43. The old woodsman, Clam Sweaty, expertly proclaimed the beast must stand well over eight feet tall, as its stride was measured at 21 feet. This explained the ease with which the creature cleared Bearhead Creek. The creature was never found, but mayhaw picking along Bearhead has never been quite the same. Even today, pickers tend to straighten up, grab their lower backs, sniff the air and look around with the uneasy feeling that they are being watched! ~



#### **Upcoming:**

Membership dues and website fees are due January 1<sup>st</sup> 2015.

LMA Board Meeting at  
LSU Ag Center  
300 Grady Britt Drive  
Alexandria, LA  
9:30 A.M. January 16, 2015

The 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Louisiana Mayhaw Association Conference and Field Day  
April 11, 2015 - 8am- Noon or thereabouts.

From the Editor: Sorry about the delay and typos, bad grammar, etc. It's been busy, as I'm in the busiest part of "my mayhaw calendar."