

Gulf Coast Fruit Study Newsletter

Volume 24, Issue 2

Edited By: Ethan Natelson

March 9, 2010 Meeting

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Solving a Cherry Rootstock Mystery for Houston

During the recent fruit tree sales in Houston by Urban Harvest and other groups, new low-chill sweet cherries were introduced among the plants sold. Chill requirements are only one aspect of potential success with these plants with the other parts of the equation being pollination, the appropriate rootstock, and whether our humidity and rain will cause cherry cracking, a problem in areas where cherries are grown commercially. Rick Matt had ordered some of these plants two years ago and shared them with me. We both had a number die in short order. These plants were grafted on either **Mazzard**, a full-size rootstock, or **Colt**, a dwarfing rootstock. Most of these plants I received died with open sores of bacterial canker on the rootstock. Rick Matt received replacement plants, some with the rootstock being **Citation**, a hybrid originally promoted for peaches, but a poor performer in the South and in Houston, and not directly compatible with cherries. To make **Citation** compatible, these plants were first grafted with a short segment of a patented interstem of another hybrid plant compatible with both cherries and plums, but on its own, apparently not a useful rootstock. The interstem is called **Zee-stem** for its breeder, Floyd Zaiger. I have one of these plants and it has not yet died. Recently, on the NAFEX (*North American Fruit Explorers*) chat line, a woman from Florida wrote that she had obtained these low-chill cherries from the Dave Wilson Nursery, grafted on **Myrobalan 29 C** rootstock because the demand for them had exceeded their usual rootstock selections (*sending me her e-mail from the nursery foreman, to prove it*). Moreover, she appended pictures showing that they were growing well and flowering. I could find no evidence that **Myro 29 C** is directly compatible with cherries, but none that it is not. Heidi Sheesley called her contact at the Dave Wilson Nursery, who denied they ever shipped cherries on **Myro 29 C**. It is known that a clone of **Myro 29 C** called **Adara**, developed in Spain, but allegedly not in this country, is directly compatible with sweet cherries. It is possible that this woman's successful plants have an interstem. To solve the mystery I have ordered a number of **Myro 29 C** rootstock, which is an ideal rootstock for our area with good tolerance to wet soils and nematode resistance. I will graft the cherries on **Myro 29 C** directly, and alternately with a compatible interstem, and hope to answer the question. We hope these cherries will ultimately bear in our area, a dream of the late Dr. Leon Atlas, a founder of our fruit study group.

Next Gulf Coast Fruit Study Meeting

Our upcoming meeting is at **7:00 PM** on **Tuesday, March 9** and will feature Robert Chmielewski on blueberries.

Contact Us!

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Productive Pruning of Apples and Pears

It is generally claimed that the largest and best quality pome fruits are found on younger spurs and on two-year old branches, with bearing augmented by appropriate pollination and some fruit thinning, which may have the added benefit of preventing alternate year bearing. A recent article in the *Good Fruit Grower* magazine discusses the 1-2-3 rule for proper pruning of apples and pears to promote the continual fruiting of younger wood. This begins with selections of appropriate new lateral branches – especially those with buds at the tip which should not be shortened by pruning (Figure 1). These new laterals should make up as much as a third of the laterals or renewal wood with another third made up by two-year old growth. In Figure 2, either of two potential pruning cuts (A or B) should remove the thickened section at the fork of the branch which is referred to as the ring, or the juncture of one and two-year old wood. Any three-year old wood, as shown in Figure 3, needs to be more vigorously pruned in order to stimulate new laterals. This now brings you to a three-year old branch, shown in Figure 4, with two new laterals bearing end buds. Depending upon the shape and size of the tree, the inner lateral could be removed. Pruning instruments should be sharp and cleaned with flame or alcohol, especially when moving from tree to tree. All of this process becomes much easier to accomplish when dwarfing root systems are employed.



Figure 1. Sequence of wood renewal. This one-year-old lateral is the foundation of your fruiting wood. Do not shorten it.

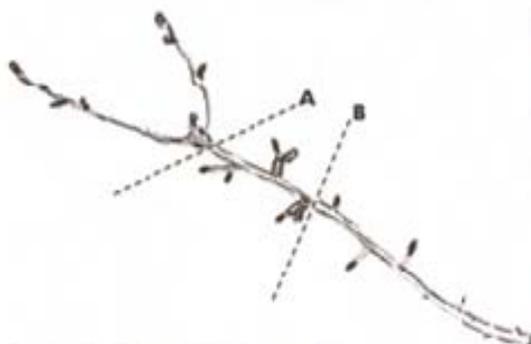


Figure 2. Two-year-old wood has set several pears at the tip end. Cut the wood at the ring (A) or deeper (B), depending on the length

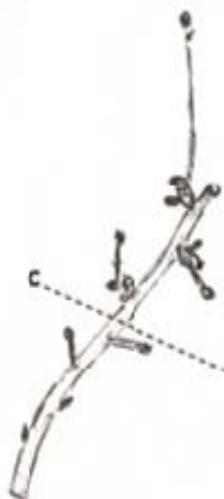


Figure 3. This three-year-old wood was cropped when it was one and two years old.



Figure 4. The three-year-old piece of wood has produced two laterals.

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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