

Regional Report from New England Fruit Consultants  
Covering Western CT, MA, Mid-southern Hudson Valley  
Andy Vega, Crop Consultant

**Overall Situation:**

**Early Spring:** Green-tip occurred for most locations in the mid and southern Hudson Valley in late March for the second year in a row. Pink lady was probably 7 – 10 days ahead of some McIntosh Cultivars. When do we establish the beginning of scab season (traditionally based on 50% green-tip of McIntosh)? 2023 was plagued by a freeze event on 5/18, that essentially knocked out 50% of the crop in our area. Fruitlets were already formed by the freeze. This year, our coldest temperatures occurred while flowers were still developing. Are cold-sensitivity critical temperatures changing?

**Late Spring:** After the close call, many of our clients experienced ideal growing conditions with seasonable average temperatures and rain events spaced out well and with enough rain for growth but without the intensity that can compromise fungicide coverage. When do we call an end to scab? NEWA called primary season over for Orange County NY on May 8<sup>th</sup>! I recommended scab sprays for another 3 weeks. One research scientist told me to simply change the dates in the model to get the results that I/they wanted. Does this defeat the purpose of what a model should be doing? Beginning around mid-June we started hearing about cases of fruit scab without leaf lesions in several blocks. Is this like “heat lightning”? There was a combined 4-day infection period that occurred on 5/27-5/30 this year. It was only about 0.5” RF but tissue expansion is significant that time of year. When did the fungicide go on? Is that cover able to protect fruit under these circumstances? Can post-infection materials protect fruit as they protect foliage?

**Summer:** In mid-August, central CT experienced up to 10” of rain in 4 days from 2 separate rain events, one was about 4”RF the other 5+” RF. These appear to be occurring more frequently in the summer months. We like to advise growers to go 2-3 weeks between fungicide applications but the heavy rain events challenge this strategy. Marssonina and bitter rot, have become “normal” pathogens throughout our growing area. Our past experience has had us developing bitter rot programs for clients south of the MA border. The last few years, we have been forced to develop bitter rot programs for even our most northern clients. Our fungicide programs limit 4 QOIs and 4 SDHIs per growing season. But many clients burn through half of these for scab, limiting options for the summer sprays, especially when the client is forced to reapply from a storm event.

## **Weather Events:**

Farmer's Superstition about full moons?

Full Moons in 2024

3/25: low temperature 22° F

4/23: low temperature 26° F, 4/26 26° F

10/17: low temperature 26.6° F

## **Crop Overview:**

Overall pretty strong but perhaps not as strong as we would have expected after the compromised crop last year? Thinning? Warm temperatures during the thinning window complicated the picture for many of the CT and southern Hudson Valley growers. After several weeks of cool temperatures, warm weather helped advance tissue development quickly. The bloom window passed quickly (extra heat but dry conditions helped keep fire blight at bay) and then we surged from 2mm – 18 mm in 10 days! Which PGRs did what?

PGRs at harvest? We have enjoyed glorious harvest conditions after a somewhat challenging August and Gala harvest. This applies mostly to the southern Hudson Valley which struggles to get color on fruit when overnight low temperatures stay in the 60s. Harvista and Retain offer amazing benefits to growers. Are we taking advantage of this?

## **Major Problems:**

Woolly apple aphid

Pear psylla

BMSB

Precision thinning

RAD/SAD