Progress Report to the Michigan Cherry Committee
Title: Managing canopy volume in tart cherry for high density orchard plantations.

Investigators: Ronald L Perry (PI), Dan Guyer, Jim Flore, Greg Lang, Nikki Rothwell and Amy Iezzoni

Objectives, hypotheses, and methods 2013

• 1. Determine the impacts of horticultural treatments such as shoot pruning, multiple leader / bush form development and summer hedging on canopy development of Montmorency and other tart cherry genotypes.
• 2. Identify the most desirable canopy architecture developed via horticulture treatments which accommodates efficient fruit removal using appropriate Over-The-Row/continuously moving harvesters.

Korvan / OXBO self propelled Spindle/tine shaker (commercial blueberry harvester – unmodified)

Two Prong Approach to High Density Tart Cherries

• Genetics
  – Using naturally compact varieties and selections

• Canopy Management
  – Pruning
  – Allowing numerous branches to develop
  – Canopy framework initiated at near ground level
  – Dormant & summer hedging
  – Recycling large branches
  – Encourage early fruit production in life of tree to compete with shoot growth
Genetic Compacts

- Carmine Jewel and others Univ of Saskatchewan
- *P. Cerasus x Fruticosa* hybrids
- MSU Tart Cherry Breeding program, A. Iezzoni

Goal

1. Develop and maintain a fruiting wall system with branching beginning at near ground level.
2. Develop and maintain Montmorency and other tart cherry varieties with canopies which can be harvested within a berry harvester tunnel dimension of less than 5 feet in width and 8 feet in height.
   - Treatments were initiated on young and mature Montmorency and other tart cherry genotypes to determine effectiveness in maintaining a compact canopy.
   - These experiments will lead to the development of a tree wall that will not extend with permanent branching (center core) beyond 30 - 40 inches in width and 6-8 feet in height.

Hypothesis

- Development of multi-leaders in trees (bush form) will divide resources (carbon translocation) in comparison to single-leader spindle bush formed trees.
- Canopy pruning by indiscriminant hedging during the winter is sufficient to control branch vigor and maintain compact dimensions.
- Summer hedging at 45 days post bloom and selective pruning of large vigorous branches in winter and summer will lead to more compact trees.
- The optimum width and height of core permanent branch system should be 36” X 72”.
- Retention of weak laterals and selective removal (recycling) of branches larger than 1 inch in diameter will be critical to maintaining compact and productive trees.
- Montmorency responds to pruning treatments, regarding hedging, differently than other tart cherry genotypes.

Is Recycling a viable option with Montmorency?

12 yr old Mont
Pruned severely 7/10/08
Top View

Dotted branches are recyclable, maintained within the 2' - 3' threshold for O.T.R. harvest. Jamie Burns, Res. Assistant, MSU, BSAE

Horticultural Practices

- Bush form
- Recycling branches
- Avoid branches perpendicular to row

Pruning Treatments Administered 2012

- Trees were selected and pruned with treatments administered at:
  - 1. Oxley's Orchard, Marcellus, MI
  - 2. Clarksville Hort Research Center

Ed Oxley was presented with a catastrophic problem, April 2010 Hail Damage Event

- 3 yr old Montmorency Orchard, planted 19X19'
- 50 acres south of Lawton
- Trees damaged severely from hail.
- Restarted 20 acres by heading at 1.5 ft height and develop into bush for Over the Row harvesting for the future.
- April 2011 inter-planted tree rows = 6x19'
Oxley’s Orchard 2012

* Pruned March 29

Trees were selected in 2 rows 326 trees total in the trial, 6 replications in a factorial where

1. **Main Plot Treatment: Topping** (height) 50% trees were topped on March 29 compared to 50% not topped. Topping was a heading treatment with 2008 planted trees topped at 5 feet and 2010 trees at 4 feet.

2. **Sub Plot Treatment: Side Hedging** Heading (tipping) cuts were made on the sides where all branches were cut, only those perpendicular to the alley compared to control. Goal was to keep within 18” canopy width.

* Pruned June 18 (45 days post bloom)

1. 50% of trees in each replication/treatment were side-hedged or topped again.

March 29, 2012

Hedged and topped 2008 tree

Hedged and topped 2010 tree

June 18, 2012

Pruned CRC Mont Trees

Recycling older branches
Is Recycling a viable option with Montmorency?

CRC 8/5/12

12 yr old Mont
Pruned severely 7/10/08

Hedging cuts
Made dormant 4/9/12

10/17/12

NWHREC