

## **WSJM, April 12, 2006 Pollination**

This is Al Gaus the Berrien County Extension Educator for fruits and ornamentals reporting from the MSU Extension office in Berrien County.

The warm weather the last few days has apricots and Japanese plums blooming. This means that other fruits will be in bloom soon. So, we are now in pollination time. Most of the fruit crops either require or will benefit from cross-pollination. Cross-pollination is where the pollen from one variety of fruit is transferred to a different variety of the same fruit. The primary pollinator in fruit crops is the honeybee. At this time of year, beekeepers bring bees into area orchards to do this pollination. Proper pollination is an essential part of producing top quality fruit. Smaller yields, misshapen fruit, and bitter pit are just a few of the results of poor pollination.

Growers can do several things to help improve pollination in their crops. First, use more than the minimum number of hives per acre. I realize that this would require more expense, but this is insurance against low yields. Most fruit crops have a minimum of 1 hive per acre. Pears and Blueberries do best with 2 hives per acre. In high-density orchards, extra hives may also be needed.

Placement of the bees in an orchard is also important. If at all possible, do not just place the hives on the ground. An upside down bin provides a great place for the hives. Being off of the cold ground, the bees might start to work earlier in the day when the pollen is at it's prime. Another key thing to do is get the bees into the orchard before the first blossom opens. This is one thing that can really hurt a grower. It is better to have the bees in the orchard several days early than one day too late. Finally, one of the most important things that a grower needs to do is read the label of any applied pesticide. Make sure it will not harm the bees. Always read the label.

Utilize these few suggestions to get better pollination in your crops this year.

Also, the April 11, 2006 Fruit CATAAlert has extensive articles on this topic – click on the link to see it (<http://www.ipm.msu.edu/cat06fruit/f04-11-06.htm>) the website.

That is all for today, this has been Al Gaus for Michigan State University Extension in Berrien County.