

**A Case Study of Organic Apple Production:
Raven Hill Orchard, East Waterboro, ME**
Renaë Moran, Sarah L. Kingsley-Richards, and L.P. Berkett

The following information is drawn from an interview with Steven Eveld, owner of Raven Hill Orchard in East Waterboro, Maine, on August 22, 2007. We sincerely thank Steven for sharing his knowledge, insight, and experiences in organic apple production.

Introduction

Disease, Arthropod, and Vertebrate Pest Management

Most insect management is planned according to what pests are coming into the orchard at certain times during the growing season, weather, and temperature to determine optimal effects on target species. Weekly scouting of the orchard for insects is performed. Apple maggot is the only pest that is monitored through traps, placed in the orchard in July. The standard Integrated Pest Management (IPM) threshold is utilized. “If you’ve got an average of five per trap or more it means the pressure for maggots is going to start damaging your fruit so you have to do something. I don’t care who you are, organic or non-organic, it wouldn’t make any difference. There are some organic people that are willing to accept more damage in exchange for less spraying, but I would just as soon have no damage.”

Insect pest management is focused on plum curculio, codling moth, and apple maggot. European apple sawfly is presumed to be managed by the same materials that are applied against plum curculio: Surround[®] and PyGanic[®]. It was found that early-bearing apples, such as ‘Lodi’, need special attention with early management as the fruitlets are larger and more attractive to insects at an earlier date. Surround[®], Dipel[®], and Entrust[®] have been applied against codling moth and are presumed to manage other pests. “I am figuring in the case of *Lepidoptera* in the worm stage would be affected by the Dipel[®] and Entrust[®] would take care of them if they are flying around.” The use of Entrust[®] for apple maggot stems from a desire to discontinue use of Surround[®] early in the season. “Mostly because they [apple maggots] come in later, I didn’t want the Sur01.059 Tm(ly CID 15 B

Insights

Steven has quickly learned a great deal about producing apples and about doing it organically. As an established organic orchard, Raven Hill had the advantage of an existing operation, albeit in need of management attention. As a new grower, “it was my first year so the timing of management will be better next year. I know more about it and that’s the critical thing.” Steven wants to explore more methods as he becomes familiar with managing his orchard. “It is a pretty much a wide open thing. The people who are out in front or on the fringe are doing things that I am not doing here yet.”

Research is needed to substantiate the new and alternative information available to growers. “People are out there just doing their own methods and they are not verified.” It is difficult for growers to interpret these practices to determine if they are worth adopting. “More information would be the key. I think it is valuable to look at [new and alternative methods] even though some of them sound kind of bizarre. We need to get somebody reputable to test them.” This should be among the top priorities for research and outreach to help enhance organic apple production in New England.

The market for organic apples in New England is “absolutely” going to expand. “I think it’s going to be more and more in demand. I don’t care where you are. I think there is going to be more demand for organic produce and fruit from everywhere because people just want what they consider to be more healthy.” The ability to demand a premium price for organic apples, however, is not expected to last due to an increase in both domestic and overseas producers. There is still an advantage to being a local producer as long as consumers “*really*” support local.

“Well, I have to say that I do believe in organic production. I do believe in using less poisonous stuff and more nonpoisonous stuff. It think it is good for the environment and it’s good for everybody concerned.”