

Life's really hectic

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He is a graduate of Delaware Valley College, Doylestown, in horticulture. Prior to becoming owner of Cherry Hill in 1970, he managed the operation for seven years. At that time it was known as Shenk's Fruit Farm.

As owner of Cherry Hill, (he actually owns only 85 acres of the entire orchard. The rest he rents) he has made quite a few changes.

"When I first came here there were only three acres of peaches and hardly any bearing apples," Haas states. "But, I've been diversifying." This move to diversify is simply

economic. As Haas puts it the cherry crop is one of the most delicate of all crops, and to depend on it, solely, is much too risky.

Haas has also experimented with new varieties of trees. His dream is to convert his cherry orchard to all dwarf trees.

"If someone had a dwarf cherry tree that I knew would work, I'd start all over," says Haas without blinking an eye. "I've piddled around with dwarf trees for 14 years and I'm beginning to wonder if I'll ever have a dwarf orchard."

Haas sees several advantages to dwarf trees, the most obvious being the elimination of ladders.

"With dwarf trees it's just

easier for people to pick and I don't have to worry about any accidents," he says.

Right now there are three basic ways to get dwarf cherry trees, none of which is widely used. One root stock is "Colt" from England, which is now being studied at Penn State due to a request from Haas. That root stock has to be under quarantine for three years.

Another type is M x M, developed by Lyle Brooks of Oregon. Haas has three selections from that series presently planted in his orchard.

Haas is also experimenting on dwarfing trees, himself. He grafts a North Star variety of cherry onto a Mazzard root stock and then buds a cultivar, Early Burlat, onto the North Star. So far, he has about a dozen of this type of dwarf tree. Five hundred more cherry trees are being readied to bud the cultivar this year.

Apples have already been dwarfed, and Haas has rows

of these trellised trees planted.

The plants are easier to manage," he says, explaining why dwarfing has already been done with this fruit. But, mainly, there's an economic reason behind why the apples are dwarfed — there are more apple growers in the state and there has been more money poured into research."

So, in some ways, the cherry crop is one that has an open field for innovation. And, Richard Haas is always looking for a way to improve the crop and his orchard, in particular.

"You know," he says with a grin. "My boys will probably be just like me. They'll look at the way I've come to run this orchard and they'll say, 'Dad has this all messed up,' and they may change it. But, I'm keeping a book just for them. I hope they read it."


If they do, perhaps they will grow smart about the cherry crop before they grow old. They'll have a good teacher.



Julie Greider, the daughter of Robert Greider, Columbia R2, smiles at the thought of eating the big, delicious cherries she is picking.



Instead of making his customers climb ladders to reach for the big sweet cherries on the trips of the trees, Richard Haas has purchased a shaker to knock all the fruit from the upper branches onto tarps below.



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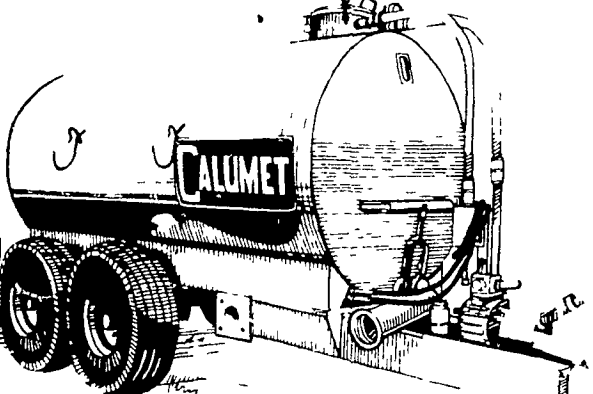
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