

Freezing Weather Delays Syrup Production

ITHACA, N.Y. — Freezing weather conditions have delayed most of Western New York maple syrup production by at least 10 days.

Preliminary reports indicate that many maple syrup producers were delayed in tapping their trees due to freezing weather conditions during late February and early March.

Reports by producers indicate that most maple trees will be tapped for maple syrup production by March 15 for western New York and that production will be that of an average year.

The prolonged freezing temperatures delayed our normal window for tapping trees by at least 10 days. In most areas, maple trees were still frozen solid in most places as of March 10. Tapping trees during freezing weather conditions promotes maple trees to crack and may cause permanent damage to the tree.

Regardless of current weather conditions, we do not expect the season to run longer due to the cold weather. On average the season in western New York ends on or about March 30th.

As we approach and enter into spring (March 21), the sun rises higher in the sky which contributes to additional radiant heat as a result of extended and more direct sunshine.

More direct sunshine contributes not only to warmer ambient air temperatures but significantly contributes to an increase in surface temperatures of the tree.

Consequently, an increase in radiant heat promotes a physiological change in the tree that triggers bud formation resulting in the formation of buddy sap which signifies the end of the tapping season. Buddy sap has a very unpleasant odor and many producers that specialize in only high quality syrup will stop collecting sap. Sap at the beginning

of the season is water white, clear and transparent. It has a sweet taste and practically no odor.

During the week of March 10, we expect that start of a winter thaw (temperatures above 32 F) for a three to four day period that will trigger the first run of sap for many sugar bush operations.

Above average snowfall has contributed to saturation of most soils and for most areas the soil has not frozen to any significant depth. Consequently, we expect an initial heavy sap flow for most area producers.

This year's heavy snows will provide for logistical problems for many sugar bush operations. The snow pack (in some areas as much as 3 feet or more) will provide for difficult conditions for many producers so that they can get at their trees to tap as well as move sap to their sugarhouse to make syrup.

Ideal conditions for tapping are freezing temperatures at night and just above freezing temperatures during the day (32-45). This creates a differential in the pressure of the tree to encourage sap flow. Typically, the tree will generate 12 psi to encourage sap flow. Currently we have excellent subsoil moisture which will help ensure an adequate supply of soil moisture for sap production as well as a differential in pressure as caused by the temperature swings.

To date, a few maple syrup producers that have tapped are reporting minimal sap flow, however, the sugar content of this sap has been excellent (2.8 percent). Higher sugar contents are likely due to the past summer's drought. During a drought, abundant sunshine encourages increased photosynthesis production that may lead to increased sugar production.

In addition, the colder weather may also be promoting less movement of water within the tree, consequently contributing to a higher concentration of sugar within the sap flow. As a result, some producers are hoping that the first run of sap will produce a very highly desirable light and delicate flavored syrup. Maple syrup grades are light,

medium, dark amber, grade B, and commercial.

SPECIAL EVENT: The New York State Maple Weekend, March 22-23, 2003. All partici-

pating sugarhouses will be open to the public statewide from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. For a list of participating sugarhouses go to www.mapleweekend.com.

Open House: Career Choices

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences will host prospective students at its 10th annual Open House Saturday, March 22, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. here at the Hetzel Union Building.

"Teenagers have lots of questions when it comes to careers and employment," said Marianne Fivek, assistant to the dean for student recruitment and activities. "Our open house highlights opportunities in the agricultural sciences in an informal, relaxed setting where students can get personal attention.

"About 60 faculty, staff, and students from the college will be there to answer questions about the agricultural sciences and about university life," said Fivek.

Attendees can learn about careers in agricultural and related fields and the college's 18 undergraduate majors, including animal science, food science, landscape design, agribusiness management, agricultural and biological engineering and environmental resource management. The event will begin with an informational fair at 8 a.m., followed by a general session at 9 a.m. and academic advising ses-

sions at 10:15 a.m.

To register for the open house or for more information, visit the World Wide Web at <http://www.cas.psu.edu> or contact the Office for Undergraduate Education at (814) 865-7521.

Prize Winner

EPHRATA (Lancaster Co.) — *Lancaster Farming* recently selected a two-year free subscription winner from the New York Farm Show.

Billy Davis II, Granville Summit, is the winner of the subscription. Congratulations!

Clarion Office Closed March 21

SHIPPENVILLE (Clarion Co.) — Penn State Cooperative Extension in Clarion County will be closed Friday, March 21 for building repairs.

The office will reopen at 8:30 a.m. Monday, March 24.

For more information, contact Penn State Cooperative Extension in Clarion County, PO Box 200, 405 Main Street, Shippenville, PA 16254, (814) 782-0033, fax (814) 782-0034, e-mail ClarionExt@psu.edu.

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