Tips for Managing Young High Density Apple Plantings

By Tyler Hardy
Brookdale Fruit Farm, Inc.
Brookdale History

- Brookdale Fruit Farm established in 1847
- Currently managed by the 5th, 6th, and 7th generations of the family
- Farming around 350+ Acres
  - Certified Organic 5 Acres
- 4 major business units
  - Wholesale, Retail, Pick Your Own, Supplies
Apple Production

165 Acres of Apples
- Many different sizes and systems
Planting mainly tall spindle since 2008
- M9, B9, G11, G41, G935, Nic-29
  M9-337, B10, M26, B9/111, Pajam-2
Rubymac
Lindamac
Snappymac
Macoun
Royalcourt
Gala
Early Fuji
Fuji
Snowsweet
Honeycrisp
MAIA-1
MAIA-11
Crimsoncrisp
Zestar
Dandee Red
Empire
High Density Problems

Biggest problem was inconsistent planting depth
- Scion rooting
- Lose production/increase vegetation

AVOID THE DREADED SINKING PROBLEM!!!!
- It starts with the tree planter
-Corrected planter problems
  Adjust frequently pending on field
-Having consistent shank is very advantageous
-Easy to add soil – very difficult to take away
-Use more labor
-Smøother planting surface when finished
1. Plant Tree
2. Rake in the edges
3. Adjust tree height
4. Smooth surface around tree again
More consistent bud union depth
Use the “fist” rule
Done right the first time
Can help with drainage/pooling
Get irrigation on ASAP!
Temporary header lines
2”x450’ header hose is only $145
T-tape starter or SWV $0.60 -1.60

Gets water out if no time to dig permanent underground mains
Things to Consider
Tall Spindle Chores

Painting trees
Weed Control is key
Tree Training
Extra support
Let’s tie some limbs!

Rubber bands
Max-tapener
Weights/Rocks
Pruning Newly Planted Trees
Single out the leader
Renewal cuts
Don’t crop too early!!!

-Let the tree fill space before cropping heavy
-When thinking of cropload look at rootstock and variety combinations

Honeycrisp on B9 cropped to heavy
-Pruned very aggressive
-Plenty of N
-Single leaders like younger tree
-Allow fruit but hand thin hard
Over cropped too early
Cut off every limb leaving a renewal cut
-Treat tree like newly planted
-Single leader
Tips for upright growing varieties
Tips for upright growing varieties
Tall Spindle not for you?

M26 or similar more vigorous root
4’x14’ = 777 trees/acre
Less intensive trellis system
Follow tall spindle rules
Renewal pruning system
Can still obtain high yields early
If vigor gets to be too much
crop heavy
Tall Spindle not for you?

Bud118
5’-7’ x 14’-16’ spacing
622-384 trees/acre
Bottom scaffold semi-permanent
Potential for 1000+ bushel/acre
Limb training essential in first couple years
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