

# Editorial

## Resilience in the Face of Adversity

On a beautiful summer afternoon, not long ago, I spoke about “resilience” to a group gathered in Jordan Hall at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station to celebrate the agreement reached between Cornell and New York Apple Growers, LLC to license two, very promising new apple varieties developed by our breeding program. We were, in effect, celebrating opportunity generated by tough negotiation and a joint willingness to take risks based on the promised reward of many years of hard work, collaboration, on-farm evaluation and good science wrapped up in the yet-to-be harvested fruits of some 900,000 trees New York growers have signed up to plant over the next five years.

We held this celebratory event at the end of a two-week period during which the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost nearly 500 points, unemployment stood stubbornly at 9.5%, and the New York apple harvest was predicted to come in early, but down by 13% over 2009, thanks to severe spring frost in some parts of the state. Earlier in August, the New York State legislature passed a state budget, almost four months late, that severely cut support for agricultural research and extension at Cornell and for the functions for which the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets is responsible. So, everyone in the room, including me, knew all about adversity in 2010.

Yet, as I’ve reflected further on the nature of resilience in an agricultural context, it’s become clearer to me that no one sector of the economy nor any given generation should spend much time trying to claim a corner on hard times. Certainly, over the years, apple growers in New York State have seen their share of low prices, disease outbreaks, barriers to profitable markets, market losses, conflict among our important growing regions, major crop damage inflicted by severe weather and inadequate crop insurance programs.

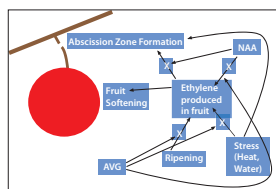
In spite of all this, growers, Cornell researchers and university leaders, and our most effective state and federal government officials recognize that exhaustive exploration of our litany of bad breaks is a singularly unproductive pursuit. Given that realization, we’ve established a record of persistent, sometimes visionary cooperation that has resulted in major, innovative accomplishments such as Premier Apple Cooperative, ever more productive growing systems, advances in the effort to control fire blight, Empire and Jonagold apples, cold hardy and fire blight resistant rootstocks, and even the USDA’s Apple Market Loss Assistance Program.

The license agreement under which all New York producers have been offered the opportunity to grow and market New York 1 and New York 2 apple varieties is the latest testament to the creative resilience of our growers and the institutions that have worked for more than 125 years to facilitate prosperity in our orchards and rural communities. Times are indeed hard, and state funding cutbacks over the past 20 years have led many land grant universities to significantly scale back or even eliminate plant breeding programs. At Cornell, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences has made a purposeful choice to maintain its long and productive commitment to plant breeding programs. That investment, the dedicated people who make it work in the field and, literally, its fruits represent Cornell’s contribution to the private-public-university partnership that will ensure success for these New York grown apple varieties in the marketplace.

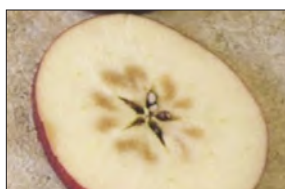
So, in the face of our generation’s version of true adversity, the managed variety initiative is one more significant example of resilience—extraordinary cooperation, willingness to take risks, innovation, good science and good market sense, hard work and  
*(Continued on p.2)*



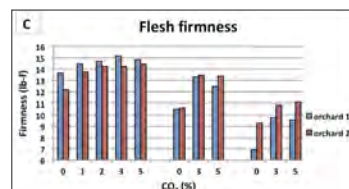
5



9



15



19



23

## Contents

### 5 The Failure of Postharvest Treatments to Control Firm Flesh Browning in Empire Apples.

Hannah J. James, Jacqueline F. Nock and Chris B. Watkins

### 9 Retain Combined with NAA Controls Pre-harvest Drop of McIntosh Apples Better Than Either Chemical Alone

Terence Robinson, Steve Hoying, Kevin Iungerman and Darius Kviklyks

### 15 Glyphosate Exposure Contributes to Internal Browning of Apples during Long-Term Storage

Dave Rosenberger, Chris Watkins, Mario Miranda Sazo, Craig Kahlke, and Jacqueline Nock

### 19 Storage Disorders of Controlled Atmosphere-Stored Empire Apples

Christopher B. Watkins

### 23 Controlling Dogwood Borer Using an Antagonistic Sex Pheromone Blend to Disrupt Mating

Dave Kain and Art Agnello

**COVER: A 4th leaf tall spindle orchard of September Wonder Early Fuji on G.11 rootstock at the Rod Dressel demonstration orchard with a yield 2000 bushels/acre.**

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**(Editorial, cont.)**

vision—that should inspire New Yorkers in agriculture to follow those who came before us in making the very best of the opportunities offered us by the land we treasure.

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