

Unite

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create anniversary ales such as Coolship Red, made with raspberries; Little Sal, featuring blueberries from Windham; and the sour cherry ale, Nancy, named after Nancy Bunting, Earl's wife.

"We only make it once a year — only use fresh fruit," said Perkins, who admits sometimes Mother Nature stands in the way.

This year, because of a cherry crop failure from winterkill, Allagash only received 200 pounds of cherries, not the 4,000 it needs. The salvaged few will be used in their multiberry ruby red Pick Your Own beer. Nancy is on hiatus. "Sometimes there are down-sides," the brewmaster said. "We think it would be better if we could sell it."

In early August the excitement at Rising Tide is the release of Coulis and Cordial, two beers made with locally procured fruit.

For Coulis, hundreds of raspberries from Limington fermented for eight weeks in barrels of Belgian yeast, malt and wheat. It's the first fruit beer the East Bayside company has created in years.

"It's a great opportunity for us to extend our brand and keep the level of excitement of what we do high," Nathan Sanborn, Rising Tide's co-owner, said. The brewery is delving into local grains and striking partnerships with Maine coffee roasters such as Tandem for collaborations, but local fruit is a new move in their playbook.

"This is one of our first opportunities to work with fruit," said Sanborn, who hired Doles Orchards to



MAT TROGNER | ALLAGASH BREWING CO.

Evan Culver, brewer at Allagash Brewing Co., adds fresh strawberries from Doles Orchard to a Belgian ale.

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NATHAN SANBORN, RISING TIDE CO-OWNER

make wooden flight boxes for their tasting room. Sanborn soon discovered their Edenic fruit. The gears turned.

"The quality of their raspberries is very high. The flavor profile is incredible. The extraction happened much faster — both the cherries and raspberries had a bold and wonderful fresh fruit flavor," said Sanborn, who has also experimented with local potatoes for an IPA.

For fruit growers like the Buntings at Doles, interest from brewers comes at a good time.

"The whole trend toward local has been a wonderful thing," Emily Bunting said. The farm moved from vege-

table production to fruit years ago, partly because brewers came calling. "They are paying us a good price," she said. "It's been a nice extra outlet."

And even better, "the breweries use the product to make another product," she added. "They don't have to double the price ... unlike retailers." So the Buntings make more profit in the exchange.

But beyond financials, the farmers quicken when they see beer made with their fruit on tap. "There is a sense of pride. It's exciting," said Emily Bunting, who recently tried Liquid Riot Bottling Co.'s strawberry cream ale and was delighted to dis-

cover the special essence was because of her berries. "It makes you feel like a bigger part of the community."

As the craft beer scene in Maine expands, demand for inventive ingredients is driving agricultural choices.

"We are growing and they are planting more and more cherry trees," said Perkins, who is pleased with the partnership.

Even startups such as Eighteen twenty wines, a soon-to-open Portland winery, are basing their business on local crops. Co-owner Amanda O'Brien is working with Doles Orchard and Spiller Farm in Wells to supply them with enough rhubarb to launch this fall.

"Rhubarb isn't as difficult a crop as cherries or grapes. It's sturdy. And once it matures, it grows like a weed," O'Brien said. "We are working now with farms for year three and four, so we know it will be mature and available."

Drought

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not the way I'd like to see it," said Fenderson, who predicts his hay crop will be shot. "It's the second bad year for hay. Looks like there will not be a second crop, unless things change around real quick. Just a slow, steady rain will help."

The piddling bouts of rain falling on York County since July are barely making a dent.

But that's not the case up north. "Aroostook County has had adequate summer rains, which is good because potatoes need the water to bulk up. York County is in the severe category," Dave Colson, agriculture services director for Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, said.

Farmers who invest in irrigation, such as Harris, are using it liberally to keep crops thriving.

"Folks that don't have irrigation are seeing crop failures," Colson said, singling out melons and tomatoes not grown in hoop houses or greenhouses as hardest hit.

"They soak up a lot of moisture and require that to get to size. Short term we will see a reduction of winter squash," Colson said. Because apple trees are not typically irrigated in New England, that crop is predicted to be less than average this fall.

Ramona Snell of Snell Family Farm in Buxton expects the volume of fruit at her pick-your-own orchard to shrink.

"The drought is very stressful. There are things we can't get water to that are suffering. You hear there are showers and get your hopes up, and 15 little drops leads to dust," Snell said.

For now, what's needed is a steady extended rainfall "to allow moisture to be ab-

sorbed into the ground," Colson said.

These farmers are praying for moisture to fall from the sky, but they are flat out.

"Apples are down. It will be a light crop this year. Onions that haven't had water are smaller. They will finish up early. People that are raising corn are trying to get water on it. ... The farmers are working hard," Snell said.

And because this season dictates the next, autumn looms large.

"We are trying to keep going. We need to get some things planted now that grow in the fall. Some water from the sky would be well appreciated," Snell said. "Whenever it rains you realize how feeble your attempts are compared to real, nice rain."

If there is silver lining of this dry season, it's fewer insects and less disease. "In 2009-2010 we had late blight on tomatoes, which had a much bigger effect. There are no signs right now. That's one good thing," Colson said.

Pests such as the spotted wing drosophila, a small fruit fly that was a scourge for farmers in summers past, is "real, real low in numbers," Jim Dill, UMaine Extension School's pest management specialist, said. "They are so late because it's too hot and dry. Japanese beetles are spotty and late too."

The other plus of a rainless summer? People are out and about.

"Hot dry summers are good for business. People are going to the lakes, beaches, having cookouts and stopping by to get stuff for those events," Rachel Harris, who helps run Harris Farm, said. "We have the same delicious sweet corn, all the veggies. ... Crops like the heat, as long as you add water."

Wood

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cent of Maine — 17 million acres — is forested, and 5 million of those acres are owned by small woodland owners in parcels ranging from 10 to 1,000 acres.

"We absolutely need our small woodlot owners in Maine," Andrew Shultz, landowner outreach forester with the Maine Forest Service, said. "We should care about them and we do care about them."

On average, according to Shultz, these small, private woodlots are between 50 and 60 acres.

"Taken together, they make up quite a chunk of the state's forest," he said. "The mills get a significant portion of wood from private, smaller woodlots."

Managing those woodlots for commercial harvests — cutting timber to sell at a profit — is among the goals of Maine's small woodlot owners, according to Tom Doak, executive director of the Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine.

"There has been a real shift toward more small ownership of woodlots in Maine," Doak said. "This means there has also been a shift for the mills now sourcing wood from the small woodlot owners."

Doak said his group has tracked a "dramatic" shift in Maine timber markets in the last two years, with the state's large, commercial landowners with huge softwood holdings scaling back their harvesting operations as the markets for trees such as spruce and fir have dropped. What Maine's remaining mills now want is hardwood, Doak said, and more and more they are looking to the hardwood stands managed by the small woodlot owners.

"The mills need to look at who has that resource," he said. "Often people make the decision to harvest their timber when they need money, [and] they will wait until there is a need for the trees they have on their land."

That often means taking the long view, Shultz said, because there can be major fluctuations in the timber market from year to year. Overall, he said, prices on most varieties of Maine timber are down. According to the most recent data from the state department of forestry, spruce and fir harvested for pulpwood, for example was valued on average \$12.60 per cord in 2014,

down from a high of \$17.61 per cord in 1999.

"People don't get wealthy owning small woodlots," Doak said. "We have seen a decrease in the value of wood overall, but there is still a market for quality trees and quality trees will always be worth something."

To end up with a timber stand that could produce some sort of income, takes good management, Shultz said.

His agency employs 10 district forest rangers scattered around the state who are available to provide free land management recommendations through the state's "Be Woods Wise" stewardship program.

"Sometimes they provide technical assistance, [but] more often they walk and talk with the landowner to help that owner get a broad perspective on what is going on and what can be done with the land."

Landowners also can hire "consulting foresters" who take a detailed look at property, inventory what's on it and then work with the owner to design a plan based on what the owner wants to get from the land.

"Every landowner is unique," Shultz said. "Everyone has their own approach."

Laura Audibert is a consulting forester working out of Fort Kent who has prepared dozens of forest management plans for small woodlot owners.

"I work with people who are into long-term care of their land and who want to make sure it is managed properly," Audibert said. "They want to see a healthy and productive stand of trees — in some cases for their retirement or in other cases they want to have something of value to pass down to future generations."

Audibert bases her plans on the owner's primary land-use objectives, which can include commercial harvesting, promoting wildlife habitat, firewood production, recreational uses or aesthetics. The management plan is a sort of blueprint on how to best develop and maintain those objectives through selective tree cutting, pruning and planting.

"Depending on where people want to go with their woodlots, a management plan can be a great step," Shultz said.

As far as Doak and SWOAM are concerned, those management plans are working, and the state's small woodlots are in relatively good shape.

"When you look around,

on average you see a well stocked forest on small woodlots," he said. "These landowners tend to add inventory, and the volume of trees is growing fast."

At the same time, Doak said, small woodlot owners do face some challenges.

"This is an aging population," he said. "Forty percent of the [small woodlot land] is held by people 65 years old and older."

Doak wonders what is going to happen to that land when those owners decide they want to retire from landownership.

"Does [that land] get carved up into smaller pieces for houselots?" Doak said. "Does the next generation of owners care about forest management as much as the current generation?"

In northern Maine, Guimond shares those concerns. He is currently logging his land with his son and hopes to one day turn over his entire operation to the next generation, but he's worried about the future.

"When I started out, you could make a living on your own land," Guimond said. "Today, with the drop in the price of wood and increase in overhead, a man really can't."

Guimond blames a market that has long been driven by large, commercial landowners who can afford to harvest and produce large volumes of wood for less cost than what a smaller landowner can charge, along with increases to equipment, fuel, transportation and property tax costs.

"I'm afraid those of us who want to make a living on our small woodlots are on the way out," Guimond said. "Instead you are seeing people who have the money and can afford to manage their woodlots for the future and not cut them now."

Guimond said he takes great pride in his woodlands, and while he knows he will never get rich harvesting its timber, money is not what drives him to keep going out with his chainsaw every day.

"I love my wife and my children very much," he said. "But my second love is the land."

That love of the land and focus on developing quality tree stands bodes well for Maine timber, Doak said.

"Growing for quality is key if the landowner is interested in any kind of economic return," he said. "That care and pride is often more important in the long run than the actual species grown."

Shultz said his agency works with groups such as

the Small Woodlot Owners of Maine to get information out to woodlot owners, including workshops, presentations, publications and field days on working woodlots.

"The point being, whenever we can get folks together walking in the woods to

show them what is going on and talking to each other and learning from each other, it's a great technique to pass on information," he said. "We like to call it 'Woodlot 101.'"

Trees, Shultz said, will always grow in Maine, despite market changes.

"Maybe that makes me professionally optimistic," he said. "But in Maine we see foresters and landowners continuing to work together with good loggers and when they all come together, you get great results [and] we see a lot of that going on."

Where in the Woods?

Trail Identification Contest!

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