



Record cold wipes out Ada orchards' apple, peach crops

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By



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UPDATE: Fruit losses climb: More West Michigan growers hit by record April cold

ADA, MI — Alvin Blok had hoped this year would mimic years past and be one of the best in his family orchard's 47 years, but a weekend cold snap appears to have nixed those dreams.

Blok said record late April cold early Sunday, as well as below-freezing temperatures early in the weekend,

all but wiped out his family's 45-acre apple crop, and he suspects their few acres of peaches also were decimated by the cold.

The **Blok Orchard** grows a variety of apples, including Honeycrisp, Golden Delicious and Gala.

"We have not been able to find buds that have not been frozen," Blok said. "I mean, there's at least a million buds, you can't check them all. The ones we checked ... We haven't found any that were not damaged."

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West Michigan fruit crops have been vulnerable to April's multiple cold snaps, after a record warm March kick-started the growing season several weeks early.

That's true for Jerry Sietsema, owner of **Sietsema Orchards** in Ada, who said his 15-acre apple crop and small peach crop also were wiped out by the weekend freeze.

Sietsema said his family is not insured for such losses, and can only wait until next year's growing season.

"The problem is we have maybe another month to go of frost," Sietsema said. "I see it's warming up today, but usually we get a lot of frost all the way up through May. It seems like we've had eight or 10 frosts already. We're not out of the woods yet."

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Blok said there is a small chance there could be a few apple bushels this year, but said Michigan might have to call in fruit from outside the state to meet demand.

That likely will nudge up apple and other fruit prices this year, Blok said.

"I'm sorry for the public; they like buying them," he said. "Michigan has a good taste for fruit, and they're not going to have it."

Sietsema said his family will tend to its orchard this year, and hope for the best.

"It's kind of devastating," he said.

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