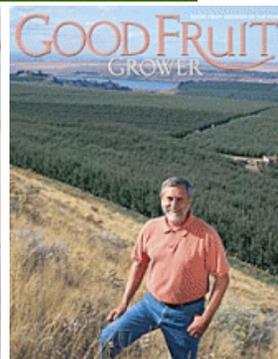


[Good Fruit Grower Skip navigation.](#)

**SUBSCRIBE  
RENEW  
ADVERTISE  
CONTACT US**

# GOOD FRUIT GROWER



January 1st, 2009  
Vol. 60 No. 1  
**GROWER OF THE YEAR**  
Good Fruit Grower of the Year  
Ralph Broetje, Prescott,  
Washington Photo by Lance  
Johnson, Yakima, Washington  
**Good Fruit Grower Magazine**  
105 South 18th Street  
Suite 217  
Yakima, Washington 98901

Voice 509-853-3520  
1-800-487-9946  
FAX 509-853-3521



**ALL**  
*visitors*  
Home  
About Us  
Departments  
Ad Index  
Classifieds  
Calendar  
Buyer's Guide  
Books & Subs  
FAQ

**ONLY**  
*subscribers*  
Subscriber Access  
Search  
Current Issue  
Back Issues  
Research  
Web Exclusives

Marc van Roechoudt had the best Royal Gala apples at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto, Canada  
Winning growers embrace innovation  
British Columbia orchardist Marc van Roechoudt likes the Ambrosia apple.  
By Terry Edwards

Two Canadian apple growers with deep roots in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley keenly endorse the maxim that the key to prosperity in their industry is the willingness to embrace innovation.

Long-time orchardists Dave Gartrell of Summerland and Marc van Roechoudt of Lake Country, just north of Kelowna, were recognized for their farming prowess with multiple awards in the apple competition at the Royal Winter Agricultural Fair in Toronto, Canada, in November.

"You have to keep up-to-date with the new varieties and planting systems," said Gartrell, 55, who claimed the overall trophy for reserve champion in the new variety section as well as first-place honors for Ambrosia and Aurora Golden Gala varieties. "Otherwise, the best way to make a small fortune in farming is to start out with a big fortune."

Besides Gala and Ambrosia, Gartrell produces Sunrise, Fuji, and Ginger Gold. Honeycrisp and Pink Lady are new varieties he's trying for 2010. Gartrell is planting at a density of 2,500 trees per acre, which he said suits the climatic conditions where he farms.

Lost password?  
Enter your email address and click the SEND button. Your information will be emailed to you.

E-mail Address:

Enter red letters:

## Ancestors

Gartrell's 16-acre Gartrell Heritage Farms is one of the Okanagan's oldest orchards, founded in 1885 by Gartrell's great-grandfather James. James Gartrell was an award-winning orchardist himself, garnering awards at fairs in Spokane in 1897 and London, England, in 1905.

Van Roechoudt's ancestors also paved the way for the growing methods he has embraced. "My father was one of the first to introduce dwarf trees to the valley, and we've always worked to modernize the orchard so we don't get left behind," said van Roechoudt, 73, whose Royal Gala apple was judged best in the commercial variety section and his Ambrosia third in new varieties.

His father, Louis, founded van Roechoudt's 50-acre Dorenberg Orchards in 1949, when he purchased the property from Marc's future father-in-law, Jim Goldie, who came to the valley in 1908.

"We have changed methods of growing, going to dwarf trees, high density and newer varieties," said van Roechoudt. "In the old days, we grew cherries, apricots, peaches, and pears. But with overproduction and dwindling returns for the old varieties, we tried a number of new varieties. We changed over to Royal Gala in 1990, and that kind of saved the farm. We've had a good run of Gala."

Ambrosia, a Canadian apple that was developed in the Similkameen area 15 years ago, has also proven to be a winner, he said.

JY CJ

SEND

"I think it's the taste and appearance of the apple," van Roechoudt explained. "It does very well in our area. It's easy to grow and it keeps well. It has multiple picks, which does make it a little more expensive to produce."

© Good Fruit Grower 2009.

Like van Roechoudt, Gartrell switched over to high-density trees in 1990.

"When I started farming in 1978, we had a mixed farm with pretty much all the varieties," he said. "We have the advantage here of having the [Pacific Agri-Food] agricultural research centre in Summerland, plus we have PICO [Okanagan Plant Improvement Corporation]. We cooperate with them, and we've been on the leading edge of new varieties."

## Optimistic

Both growers are optimistic about the future of the industry.

"We're pretty optimistic, partly because we've been here for 120 years," Gartrell said. "Prices are good right now, and, as B.C. growers, we have a pretty good reputation."

Although Gartrell Heritage Farms has dwindled in size from 85 acres over the past two decades to the present 16 acres, Gartrell's son-in-law Devon Jell is taking over the operation and leases an additional 35 acres from Gartrell's brother.

Van Roechoudt is grooming his 27-year-old daughter Madeleine, who has a degree in agriculture, to take over Dorenberg Orchards. Meanwhile, a

manager, Raymond Fisher, oversees the operation.

"I usually tell him to forget about quality and give me tonnage," van Roechoudt joked. "But if you don't have quality, you're in trouble."

### **Other winners**

Other B.C. growers who earned top honors at the fair included:

- Dashan Gill of Oliver, who took first place in the "other new varieties" division with his Nicola apples
- Gottfried Selmer of River Valley Orchards, Cawston, who took first place for Golden Delicious apples
- Ron Schneider and Andrea Turner of Heartachers Farm, Cawston, who won the heritage apple award with their Cox's Orange Pippin
- Richard and Denis MacDonald of Summerland, who had the best collection of five varieties in a basket (Aurora Golden Gala, Granny Smith, Jonagold, Spartan, and Nicola)
- Andrew Mennell of Mennell Brothers Organics, Cawston, who won the giant apple section with an apple weighing 745 grams (1 lb. 10 oz.). •

