

QUATTRO® Extra Virgin Olive Oil

BURT AND RALEIGH DISCUSS ALTERNATE-BEARING

Dear Family and Friends,

Don't worry, by "alternate bearing" we don't intend to talk about childbirth or parenting, except to the extent that our olive trees are somewhat like our children and grandchildren: we care for them as best we can, but Mother Nature also has a big say-so in what kinds of adults they become.

Each spring we send out a report with our best guess for that year's olive crop. We are always concerned when making these predictions since among her other tricks, Mother Nature ("Mom" to us) created olive trees to be "alternate bearing." That is to say, they have "on" years with a large crop, often followed by "off" years with smaller and sometimes almost no crop.

Olive fruit only grows on new shoots. In an "off" year, the tree stores up all the energy it needs for new growth in the coming year, which is when--with good rains and mild winds bestowed by Mother Nature--the trees will produce a big crop of olives on all those new shoots.

Since last year was a banner year for our trees' productivity, we know this coming year's crop will be smaller. The question is how much smaller. Even in an "off" year the trees seem to start with a lot of blossoms, which then drop *en masse*.

To try to manage the cycles of "on" and "off" years we do our best, but there's only so much we can do. In an "on" year we supply our trees with more water and nutrients so they keep producing/strengthening shoots to support the heavy crop loads, and in "off" years we reduce the water supply and nutrients so the trees don't grow like crazy in the absence of fruit. Another thing we do is to prune in a way that somewhat reduces the size of the crop variation. During an "on" year, when there is sometimes more fruit than a tree can support, we will remove branches—even ones with flowers on them which would have gone on to become fruit. When the off years come we don't prune much, if at all.



Even in an "on" year, Mom usually creates some type of disturbance that affects us in ways that we can not anticipate. You may recall we have discussed Mom's cruelty many times in previous correspondence. Except for the persistent drought over the years, Mom has varied her infliction of pain by making it too cold or too hot, too windy, too dry and even some years ago, too wet. These

occurrences almost always take place in an “on” year--exactly the worst possible time, and they send us scurrying around to try to ameliorate the situation. Mom being Mom, and farming being farming, there’s not much we can do except add more water when it’s hot and dry. But when the wind blows those beautiful blossoms off the trees, well... we can only stand by and wring our hands.

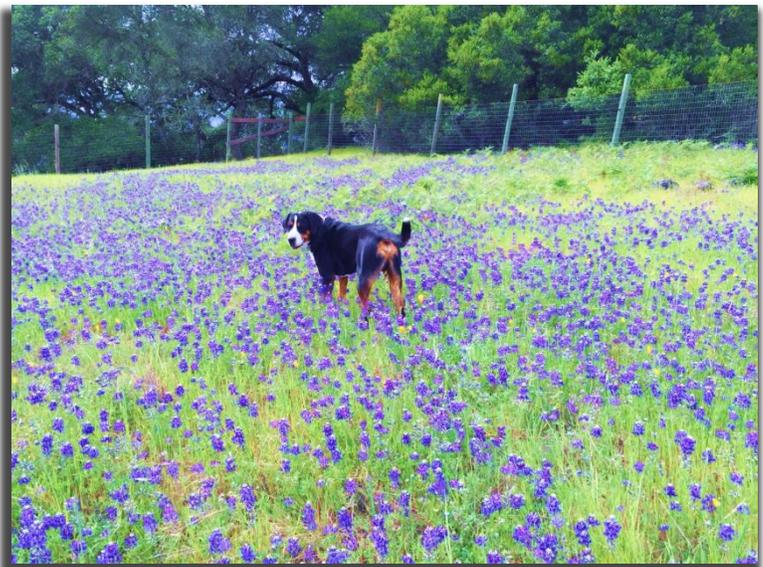


Spring is particularly exciting because we planted every tree in our orchard and when the flowers bloom and our trees are “happy” like they are now, it is similar to the feeling that you have when you see that your children or grandchildren are happy and in good health. It is also humbling to know that the trees we planted have an extraordinarily long life span. The type of “heirloom” trees in our orchard will easily live hundreds of years.

In addition to our olive trees, the rest of the plant life on the Ranch seems overjoyed. All

of our fruit trees are beginning to produce, our ancient oak trees are greener and brighter from the best new growth they have had in many years, and of course the wild grasses and wildflowers are abundant. The large meadows around the orchard are carpeted with lupine and California poppies.

Once again our plan is to pick our olives toward the end of October, press them within hours, and bottle and ship it to you as fast as we can so you can receive truly fresh olive oil. As a small artisan producer, we have been able to do this each year and we are confident we can do it again this year. Some years we have to allocate our small production; this year we hope that we can meet all of your orders. In late summer we will start estimating the size of the crop and we will keep you all informed so that you can place your orders.



Best wishes for a happy spring,

Burt and Raleigh

Riebli Point Ranch LLC | 707 575 1444 | bfohrman@quattrooliveoil.com
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