

Thinning and the Weather Window

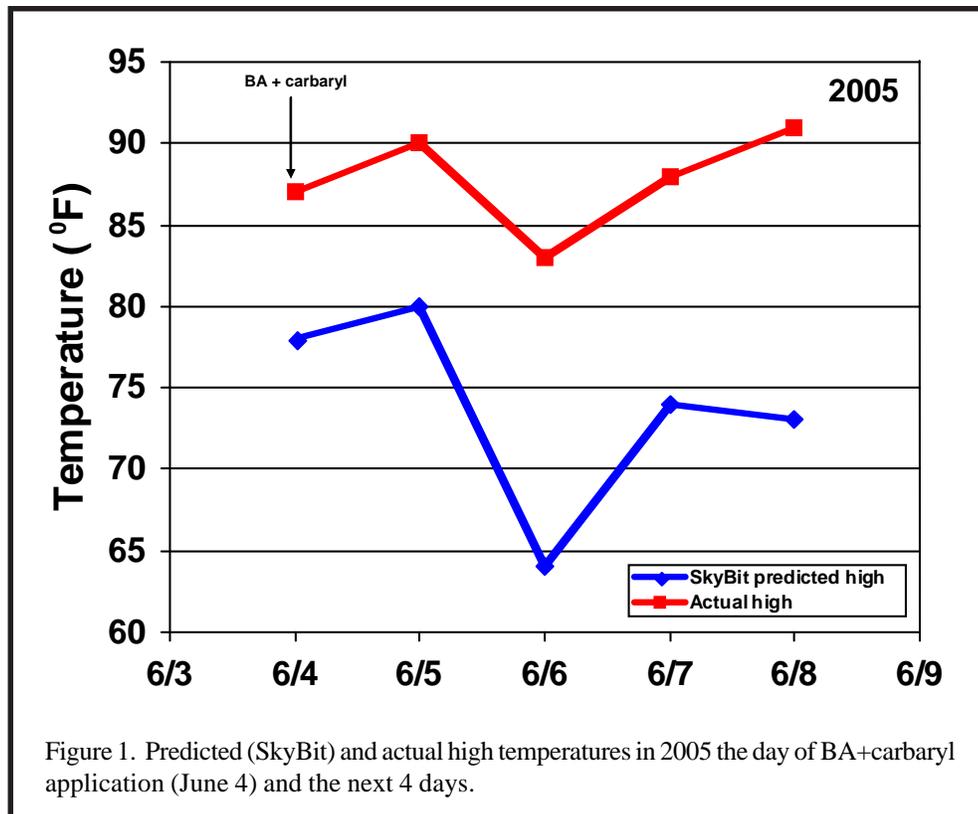
or, "I always wanted to be a meteorologist, but I'm glad that I never became one!"

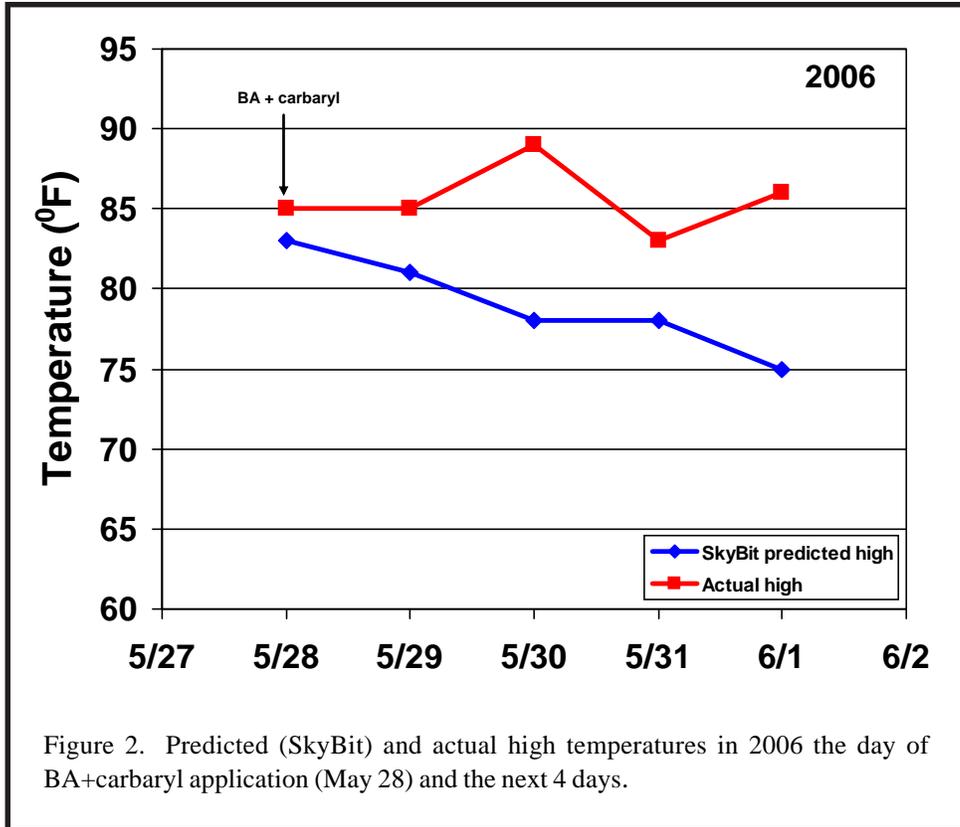
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Despite our best efforts to assess initial fruit set, to define desired final fruit set, and to fine tune chemical thinning applications, weather has the final say. Of course we all look at the weather forecast, particularly temperature trends, prior to application of a chemical thinner. We know that warmer temperatures are generally more conducive to results, particularly when using naphthaleneacetic acid (NAA) or 6-benzyl-adenine (BA). So, we after much studying and commiseration, we chose chemical thinning application rates based on the weather forecast, right? This all works well when the forecast is accurate. Unfortunately, as you have probably guessed, it is not always so. Consider Figure 1 (2005) and Figure 2 (2006) that show the high temperature forecast (SkyBit E-weather, www.skybit.com) and the actual high temperatures

recorded with a weather station (Spectrum Technologies, www.specmeters.com) at the UMass Cold Spring Orchard Research & Education Center in Belchertown, MA. Note when in the BA + carbaryl thinning spray was made. Now note the forecast temperatures for the 4 days following application, versus the actual observed temperatures. Yikes! What is a grower to do? Well, in 2005 because of the prolonged (and unforecast!) heat following BA + carbaryl application (100 ppm BA), over-thinning was the general result. As I write this, I am awaiting the outcome of the 2006 thinning application. Fortunately I was a little more cautious with my BA rate this time, but still, day (as well as night) temperatures have been significantly higher than forecast. We will see. Of course you have to understand that this time of the year is





notoriously difficult for the weather people to forecast, as the boundary between summer and winter is right over us. Still, it kind of makes me glad that I did not

become a meteorologist! But is being an apple grower any better? Here is hoping we all have a good crop in 2006, despite the weather.

