

Gil Barden Dies Unexpectedly at Age 64

Jon Clements

University of Massachusetts Extension

Rhode Island grower and friend Gil Barden died as the result of a terrible accident on May 25, 2023. Gil was working on cutting down a tree when a wayward limb fell onto him on a windy day resulting in his untimely death. It came as a gut punch to me when I found out what happened. I learned later one of Gil's skills was using the milled wood he harvested from his land for building lumber. Read Gil's obituary in the Providence Journal here. (<https://www.providencejournal.com/obituaries/ppvp0497663>)

Although I have known Gil and Sandra (Sandie) for many years, I got to know them better while traveling to New Zealand with the International Fruit Tree Association in 2018. We met up first in Atlanta, after leg one of four legs of flights to our destination in Hawkes Bay, NZ. Then in Houston after leg two where we had dinner and beers together. After getting off a very long flight from Houston to Auckland, we got off the plane together craving coffee and what did we see first right outside the arrival gate? A Dunkin Donuts! We said no way! and were informed of a local coffee truck outside the terminal where we truly enjoyed a good cup of Joe! I will never forget it!

I have to say Gil was a challenging guy, but a real good study, and worked tremendously hard with Sandie at Barden Family Orchard in N. Scituate, RI. They were both regulars (and hosts) at our cooperative MA/RI fruit twilight meetings, and had more recently often ventured north to our MA-only twilight meetings. I always appreciated seeing them there. The past couple years, Heather Faubert and I (with Heather's prompting) have nominated Gil and Sandie Barden for American Fruit Grower 'Apple Grower of the Year.' In the sidebar, read what I wrote in my nomination.

Our thoughts are with Sandie and the Barden family as they enter a challenging period at Barden Family



Sandra and Gil Barden enjoying a good cup of Joe at Auckland, NZ airport, February 25, 2018.

Orchard sans Gil. I hope they feel free to reach out for help as necessary.

SIDEBAR – Jon Clements nominates Gil and Sandra Barden for American Fruit Grower of the Year

Gil Barden exemplifies the smaller family orchard while maintaining a very high level of orchard management expertise. Gil and his wife Sandie -- they should be nominated as apple growers of the year -- operate a farm stand, go to farmers markets, and of course do pick-your-own, a New England fall tradition. Among orchards in Rhode Island, Gil has been a real study and reaches out for information across state lines and is the most proficient grower of hi-density apples in Rhode Island, including Honeycrisp. Gil and Sandie are

extremely hard workers, every time I visit them -- which is not too often, because they are out of state for me, but several times -- I am astonished by what they are up to, particularly during the growing, harvesting, and marketing seasons. I remember they attended the IFTA New Zealand tour recently, and it was a pleasure being with them there. Gil is somewhat shy, Sandie far less so -- she will let you know what she thinks for sure! (But in a rather nice way.) Barden's have hosted several Rhode Island-Massachusetts fruit growers meeting sponsored by Extension, and are supporters of Extension. Gil's Uncle John was an Extension Professor at Virginia Tech specializing in orchard research and teaching. I have no reservations nominating Gil (and Sandie!), they would make an excellent story, and are as worthy

of apple grower(s) of the year as any I have seen, particularly if it is time to highlight some of the smaller -- yet essential for our quality of life and agricultural economy here in New England -- orchards.



The REVO Piuma 4WD Harvester

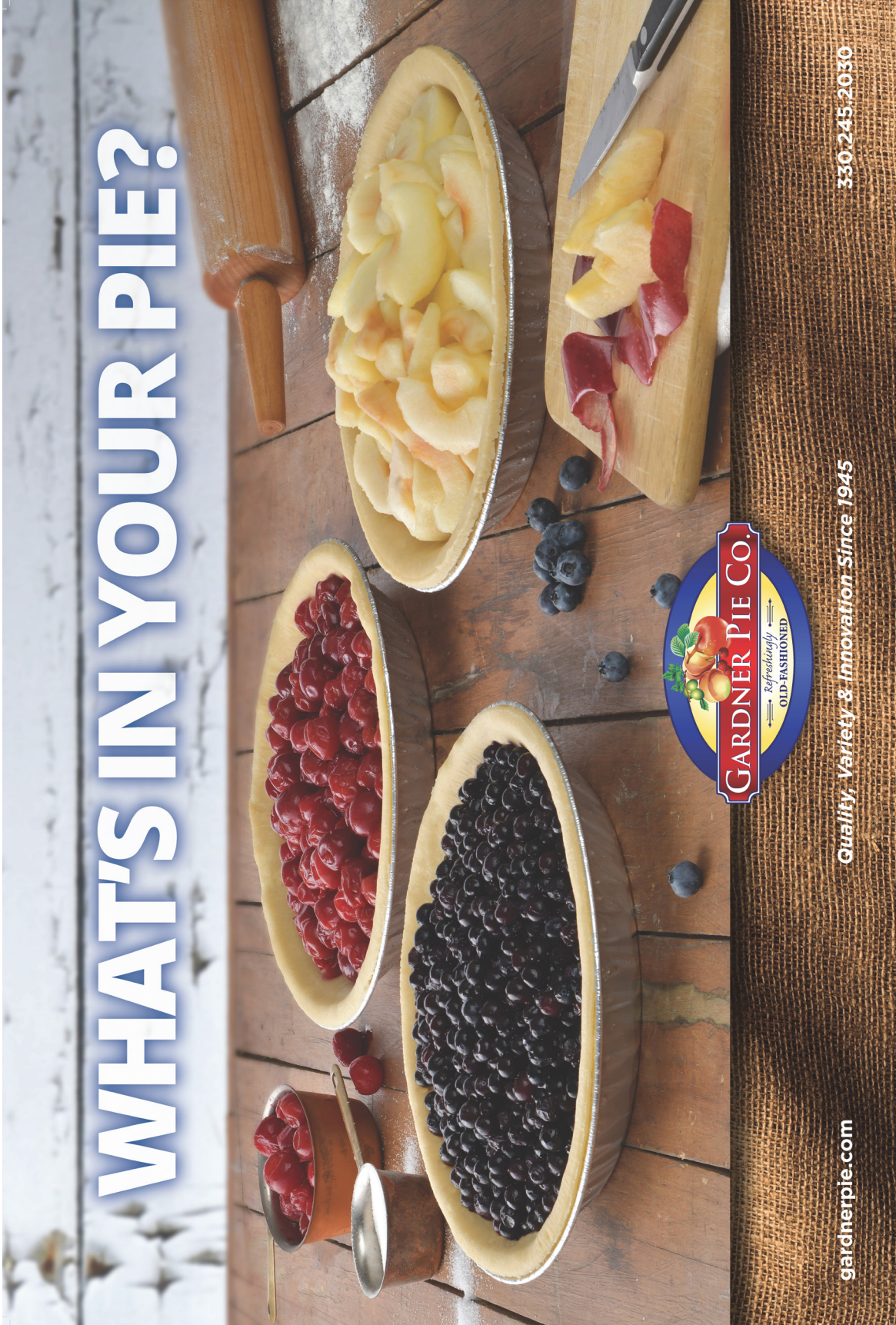
- For apple & pear high-density orchards
- Picking, pruning & trellis work
- Independent front & rear steering
- Crabbing for tight turns
- 12'-6" footprint
- Compact / no trailer to pull
- Automatic self-leveling system
- Whisper-quiet diesel engine
- Onboard compressor for air-driven tools
- Flow-thru bin design

Call OESCO for a demonstration! 800-634-5557
www.oescoinc.com



P.O. Box 540
 8 Ashfield Rd./Route 116
 Conway, MA 01341

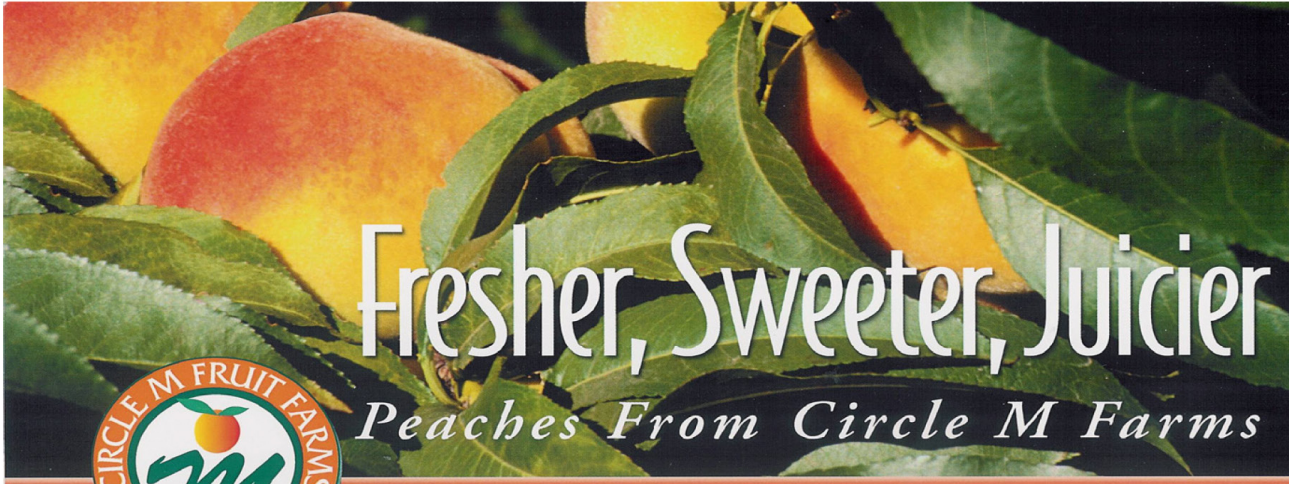
WHAT'S IN YOUR PIE?



Quality, Variety & Innovation Since 1945

330.245.2030

gardnerpie.com



Fresher, Sweeter, Juicier

Peaches From Circle M Farms



*Exceptional quality and flavor at attractive prices
Brought to you from the 4th generation family
farm of Santo John Maccherone*



- PLU Stickers Available Upon Request
- Low in Calories
- Nutritious and Delicious
- Exceptional Flavor



SANTO SAYS...

"Peaches from Circle M Farms just plain taste better. Their size and color are what your customers want, and their flavor is the icing on the cake.

That's because our orchards are tended with care and attention, and their fruit is left on the tree to ripen naturally until they reach their optimum sweetness. Then they are picked by hand, taste-tested by me to ensure quality, and packed gently into

25 lb. volume boxes for shipping. Single layer cartons are available upon request.

Circle M's 30 varieties of peaches and nectarines are known for their sweetness and their luscious color. They look as good as they taste.

Discriminating customers appreciate our white flesh peaches because of their lower acid levels and supremely sweet taste.

Add it all up: Peaches from Circle M Farms are fresher and sweeter, picked by hand when their time has come, and packed with care for a longer shelf life.

Yellow, white and donut peaches and yellow and white nectarines are available early July to late September."



**Call us at 856 856 207-4542 or
609 381-6465. Fax your order to
856 878-0404**



Available in 16 oz. and 64 oz. sizes

**Made from fresh New Jersey Peaches
"Peach Cider Drink, Peach Salsa, Peach
Preserves"**

**Santo John Maccherone
circlemfarmsllc@gmail.com**

**Circle M Farms
88 Sandy Ridge Road
Salem, N.J. 08079**