

Challenges of Organic Top Fruit Production or Things I'd do differently

Martin Soble, Whitethorn Farm

Background – Carey Organic

- ◉ 70 acre fruit and veg
- ◉ 6 acres soft fruit - outdoor
- ◉ 18 acres top and stone fruit
- ◉ Location
 - Typical 600mm/annum rain
 - Fairly sheltered, sloping, Sandy Clay Loam
- ◉ Established 2005



Background – Carey Organic

◉ Outlets

- National Wholesalers
- Major box schemes
- Local retail & catering outlets

Orchards

- ◉ 9 acres Dessert & Culinary apples
- ◉ 3 Acres Cider apples
- ◉ 2.6 acres Pears
- ◉ 1.5 acres Plums
- ◉ 2 acres Cherries

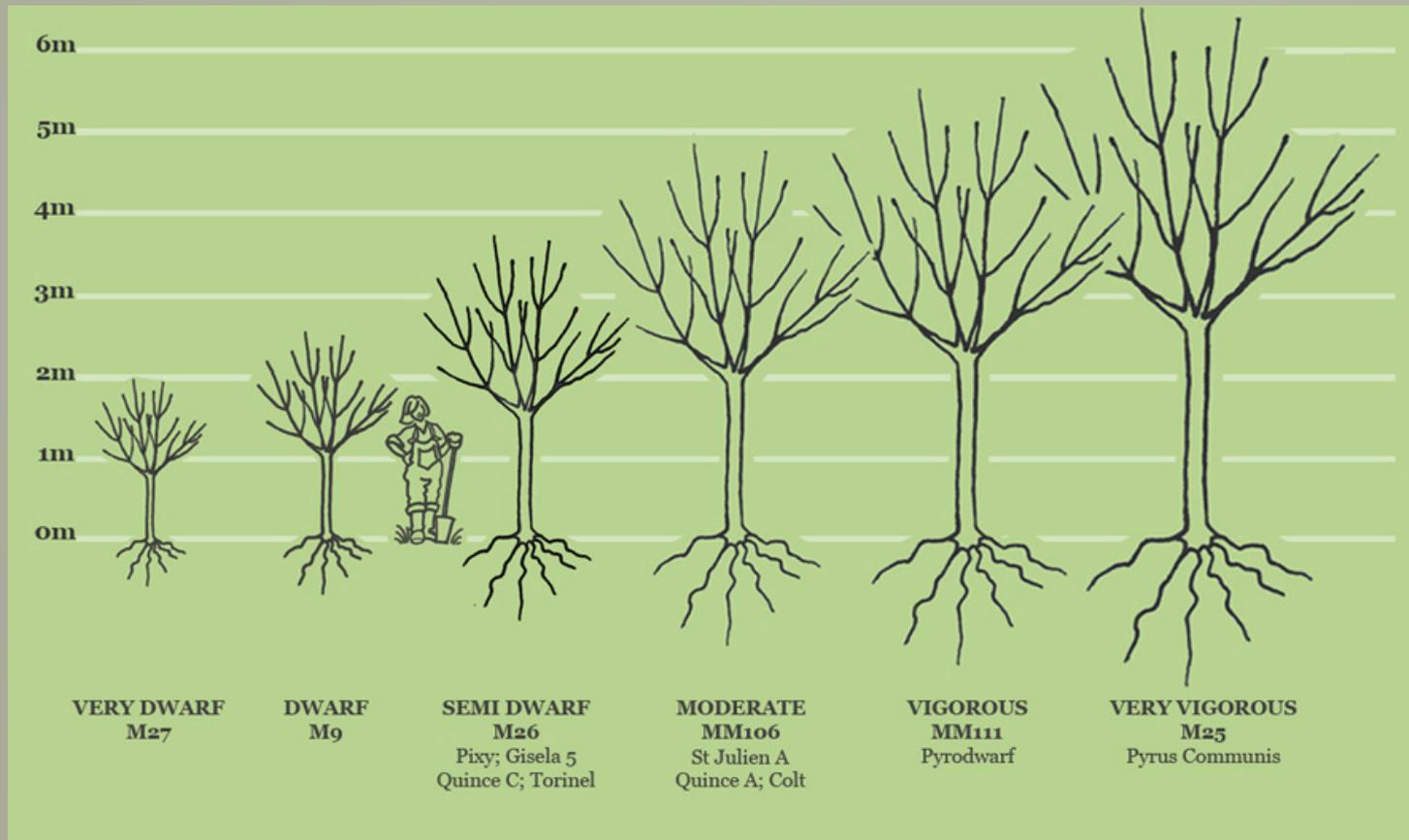
Better Varietal Choice

- Choose more carefully
 - P&D susceptibility – plums/cherries easier?
 - Marketability – size/colour/cookers
 - Harvest issues – bruising, cracking, dropping, splitting
 - Harvest timing – more earlies
- Top work wrong varieties

Rootstocks & Spacing

- Don't believe the rootstock chart!
 - Top variety makes as much difference

Rootstocks



Rootstocks & Spacing

- Don't believe the rootstock chart!
 - Top variety makes as much difference
- Choose spacing to suit variety
 - Have inter-planted many varieties

Better Canopy Management

- ◉ Prune harder and earlier!
 - “Farming light and air”
- ◉ Adopt commercial pruning approach
 - 3 or 4 big cuts a year
- ◉ Manage Height better
 - P&D control
 - Harvest
 - Stability

Fruit Thinning

- ◉ Thin more
 - It's worth the time and expense
- ◉ Larger Fruits
- ◉ Better quality Fruits
- ◉ Less tree damage

Walk the orchards more regularly

- ◉ Carry a crop walker's guide
- ◉ Make notes and take photo's
- ◉ Get agronomist help

Better P&D Management

- ◉ Keep on top of pests and disease
- ◉ Avoid build up
- ◉ Use monitoring traps
- ◉ Prioritise preventative activities
- ◉ Remove susceptible varieties

Records

- Key dates
- Bud Progress
- Crop size
- Varietal differences
- P&D

Better ground management

- ◉ Cultivation of strip
- ◉ Mulching
- ◉ Don't mow alleyways often