



## Maple Syrup Season 2009 – Summary

*report by*

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**Summary:** This (2009) may have been the best season ever for the Saint John's Maple Syrup Operation. Not only did we move into a new addition on the sugar shack, but we made a large amount of syrup, hosted an incredible number of volunteers and visitors, and were featured in multiple publications and on television.

**The New Addition:** One of the highlights of this season was the completion of the addition on the sugar shack. The project was supervised by Bill Mock and Br. Walter Kieffer, OSB. The addition featured an additional space with numerous windows to provide lots of light. The space received a heavy-workout as a classroom space for numerous student and other visitors. There are four rows of benches that can easily seat about 50 for a presentation. Many people deserve credit for working on this project. Bill Mock and Br. Walter supervised and completed much of the work. Gary Jorgenson from the physical plant wired the shack, Mike \*\*\*\*\* installed the flashing for the roof. Kevin Sittauer planed, finished and installed paneling from different species of wood for the interior which provides a terrific educational display of local wood species. We also redid our woodshed with a new tin roof that matched the sugar shack and poured a concrete floor where we can park the tractor, store buckets and other supplies. This latter project was funded, in part, by a grant from President Dan Whalen. Among the projects remaining are to paint the interior including roof, construct a cabinet of some sort for our display materials, and landscaping the exterior, rebuilding the road around the shack so it doesn't get so muddy during the season and painting the exterior. We also re-designed the plumbing feeder lines from the storage tank, moved our propane gas line to avoid carrying heavy propane cylinders up to the pad above the shack, and we constructed a new trailer to haul sap from the woods. It would be hard to understate how much the new addition has added to operation. Not only does it provide additional space and light for visitors and syrupmakers, but it makes it a much more enjoyable space in which to work.

**Syrupmakers:** Once again the leader of the production operation was Br. Walter Kieffer, OSB, and he worked closely with co-leaders Bill Mock, Stephen Saupe and a number of other individuals (*i.e.*, Gary Gillitzer, Kevin Sittauer, Dan Weber, Al Meiers, Mark Mummee, and Bob #####) who served as the core group of syrupmakers. Considering the large number of dedicated volunteers participating in the process, we held a meeting mid-season clarify responsibilities and insure that each team member was an integral part of the process.

**Education & Activities:** The Saint John's Arboretum gave tours and educational presentations to countless school groups from pre-K to college classes, CSB hockey recruits, a woman's weekend retreat group and others. The Arboretum hosted two Maple Syrup Festivals that were collectively attended by about 1300 people. The festivals featured tours of the operation, sap collection, a kids' hands-on area, tours of the sugar shack and evaporator, ice-cream sundaes, horse-drawn wagon rides, educational presentations on tree ID, sap flow, and St. John's history. A new addition to the festivals this year included a new Maple Syrup Merit Badge for Scouts.

We also hosted our annual Tapping Festival/Day. This was attended by about 60 people who enjoyed coffee, hot chocolate and rolls, prayers by Br. Walter and a Native American blessing by Jane Barth. Melissa J. Bach sang her original composition, Maple Syrup Song (Appendix 1). Within about 3 hours about 750 taps had been installed. A reporter and photographer from the

*Minneapolis Star-Tribune* attended the festivities and ultimately published a article about our operation and produced a wonderful online video (see below).

Although we didn't officially tap trees until March, in one sense we began our season on the first day of the 08-09 academic year when one of us (SGS) gave the keynote address at the College of St. Benedict Opening Convocation. This presentation, entitled "Find your sugar shack," featured an overview of the operation inviting students to participate. The full text is available through our website and was published in *Headwaters* (Saupe, 2009).

### **Production Statistics**

Our yearly stats are given in Tables 1, 2 and 3. In short, this season we installed 1287 taps and jugged 268 gallons of syrup. Overall, it was a great year! Considering that we historically make 0.19 gallons of syrup per tap, we expected to make about 245 gallons of syrup, so our yield was about 10% larger than normal. And this doesn't include the syrup used in festivals, served to visitors, etc.

**Publicity & Publications:** The following items featured the St. John's maple syrup operation.

- 2009. Saupe, Stephen G. "Maple syruping and the weather." *Sagatagan Seasons* 12 (2): 1-2. Spring.
- 2009. McAuliffe, Bill. "Tap into spring." *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*. March 26, pp T1 & T3. Also published in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* ("Monks make syrup old time way").
- 2009. Peterson, Brian. "Saint John's maple tappers." - video to accompany *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* article by B. McAuliffe, March 17, 2009. [link to video](#).
- 2009. Twin Cities Live (KSTP) - segment featuring the Saint John's Maple Syrup operation aired March 26.
- 2009. Bentz, Maia. Sap and syrup create community. *The Record*, March 27, 2009; p 4. ([link](#))
- 2009. Saupe, Stephen G. "Find your sugar shack." *Headwaters. A CSB/SJU Faculty Journal* 26: 80 - 83. CSB Convocation Address August, 2008.
- 2009. Bowen, Amy. Getting a sweet education. *St. Cloud Times*. April 3; pp 1B & 3B.
- 2009. Anon. The maple sugar shack is enlarged. *Abbey Banner*, Spring; p 28.
- 2009. Rylander, Edith. "Traditional news can go beyond bad." *St. Cloud Times*. April 19. Image of operation published to accompany this article.
- 2009. Anon. Brief mention of operation. *Community*, May 8.
- 2009. The mystery of maple sap flow. *Yard & Garden News*, April 1, p 4. Available on line at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/projects/yardandgarden/YGLNews/YGLNewsApril2009.html>.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Sap tanker loads</b>	<b>Total Sap collected (gal)</b>
17 Mar	3	525
22 Mar	3	675
23 Mar	3	650
27 Mar	1	80
30 Mar	1	170
2 Apr	9	1915
3 Apr	7	1565
4 Apr	6	1310
6 Apr	4	880
7 Apr	5	1000
8 Apr	4	715
9 Apr	2	466
13 Apr	5	895
total	53	10840

<b>Date</b>	<b>Syrup (gal)</b>
23 Mar	17
2 Apr	44
3 Apr	17
4 Apr	50
7 Apr	59
8 Apr	37
13 Apr	28
14 Apr	16
Total	268

# sap collection days	13
Tanker loads of sap	53
Total sap collected (gal)	10840
Syrup produced (gal)	268
Ratio (sap/syrup)	40.4
Average sap sugar concentration (%)	2.1
Number of volunteers	130
Hours of recorded volunteer time (excluding leaders)	760