

# Proving ground

■ Elmore nursery is looking for a few (more) strong fruit trees

Photos and story by Stefan Hard

With the snow mostly gone and a couple of mild, sunny days fresh in our minds, it is a time of year when the possibilities seem endless.

If you're one of those with a green thumb, even a little bit, and like to introduce something new to your yard each spring, a visit to Elmore Roots on Symonds Hill Road in Elmore can expand your horizons.

Elmore Roots owner David Fried will take you on a tour of the certified organic nursery and fruit grove located well above 1,000 feet on a gently sloping hillside with a view of the Woodbury Mountains.

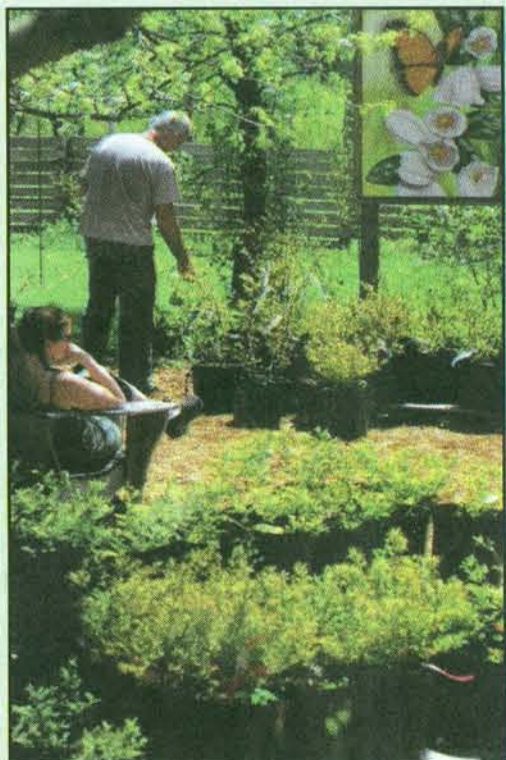
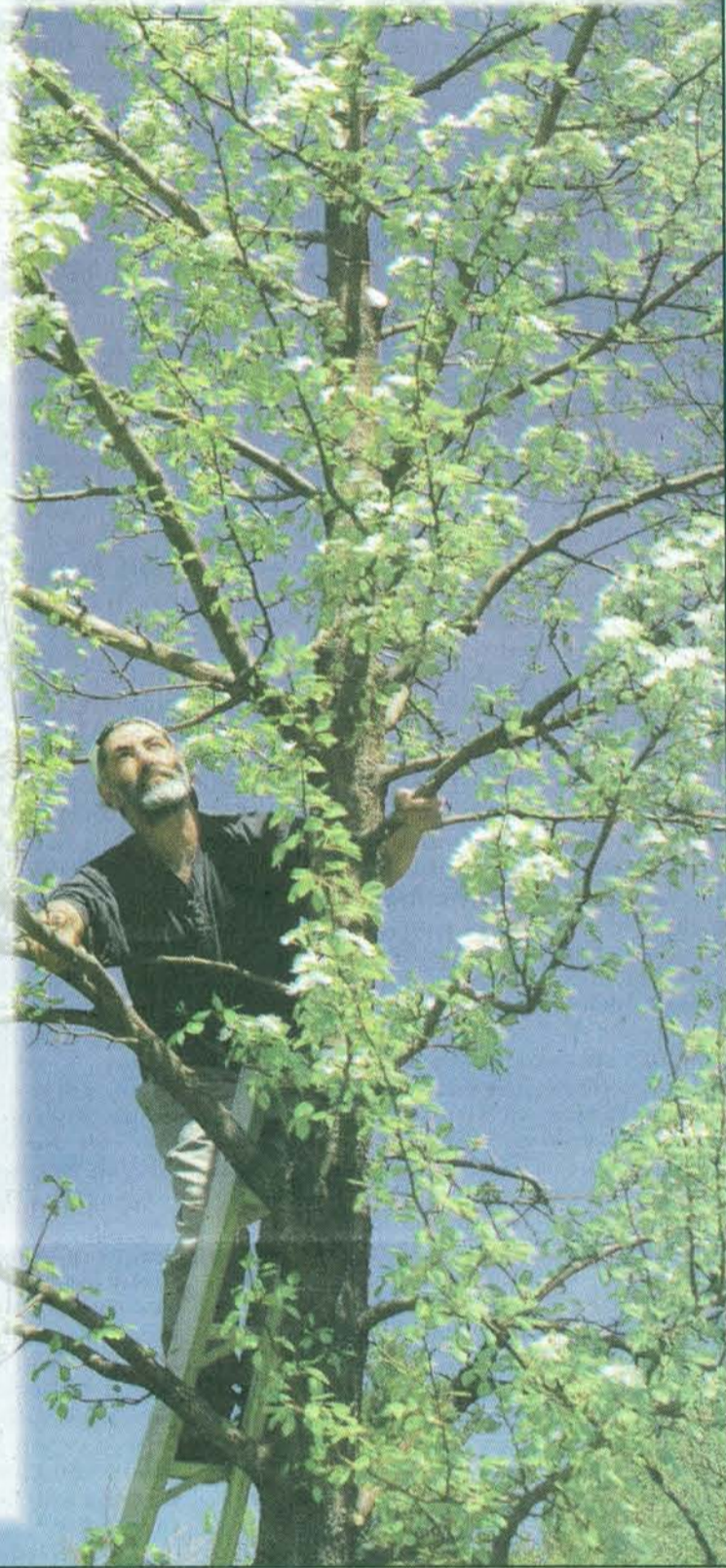
Tall and lanky, with a full, dark beard, a dark tan and a baseball cap to protect the top of his noggin from the sun, Fried is a soft-spoken guy who exudes a quiet confidence that comes from more than 30 years of perfecting his craft. That craft is testing and then duplicating varieties of fruit and nut trees that will reliably survive Vermont winters and thrive during the growing season with minimal attention.

"If it grows in Elmore, it will grow where you are," Fried will say as he takes you down neat rows of pear and cherry trees, grape and kiwi vines and blueberry bushes, just to mention a few. There's also rows of apple trees that stretch to an evergreen tree line, and this time of year, Fried is sometimes found sprawled across branches of an apple tree, pruning. A small, expert staff helps Fried keep up with all the work in the groves and greenhouses.

Fried takes pride in finding hearty varieties of fruit trees that have proven they'll withstand the harshest climate northern New England can offer. He has varieties from all over the northern tier of the country and every corner of Vermont, and he can rattle them off easily. He's equally quick with a story of how a phone call led to a visit to someone's old orchard where he took a cutting, brought it back to Elmore, grafted it onto a seedling, then observed its ability over multiple seasons to withstand what nature could dish out.

Just under the surface, Fried is bubbling with enthusiasm and excitement as spring comes into fullness, and he loves introducing folks to the idea that they can go beyond the ordinary in their plantings. "Just look," he'll tell you as you walk the fruit groves on an early May morning, "these all grow and thrive here. Anyone can do it."

Neatly arranged grounds with benches, picnic tables and trellises set in bark mulch and ringed by rose bushes and other blooming shrubs make Elmore Roots a nice place just to hang out, even if you just came to look around and imagine yourself someday picking a ripe pear off a tree in your backyard in Vermont.



Top, Elmore Roots owner David Fried looks over an apple tree after pruning at the Elmore nursery and grove on an idyllic mid-May afternoon.

Above, a hand-painted sign announces plum trees for sale at Elmore Roots in Elmore. The high-elevation nursery and grove specializes in varieties of plants you wouldn't think would grow in Vermont.

Left, visitors browse or just relax in lush surroundings just outside the retail center at Elmore Roots nursery and fruit grove in Elmore.