When he pares pairs of pears you know something sweet is in the air. They are hanging high in the trees, surrounded by bees, and I'd love another one, please. And when the crop drops we should stop what we're doing and bop to the top of the orchard hill.

Pears ripen quickly and we picked up a few baskets that had already fallen. That was on Sunday, and Monday afternoon I planned on harvesting them. But first I had to plant turnips, mustard, and a crimson clover cover crop, which took until Tuesday.

An afternoon thunderstorm chased me out of the field, and the rain kept falling. Early Wednesday morning the turnip field was underwater, again.

A pair of one "hundred-year floods" within one hundred days caused me to temporarily forget the pears.

The Long Hungry raged for a few days and we couldn't get across it. After fixing the washed out roads, and dealing with umpteen bushels of vegetables, I finally got up to the orchard a week late. Most were already on the ground in various stages of over-ripeness.

Magness is a golden color with buttery flesh as sweet as sugar. Maxina is slightly larger, yellowish, and has a lighter flesh, but is equally sweet.

Both are about the best thing you've ever put in your mouth and dripped down your chin.

The three-legged orchard ladder was moved from tree to tree as we filled the baskets. A long handled fruit picker plucked the ones that were higher than we could reach.

Life gets busy, and it was a few days before we got back to them. About half were in desperate need of attention, so out come the paring knives.

We filled the dehydrator up, froze some on a cookie sheet, and made preserves with the rest.

The other pears traveled all the way to Nashville and delighted our customers. But they were over ripe and did not hold up well in the shipping.

These pear varieties are so delicate; they ought to be picked and shipped green, and then ripened at our members' homes.

Fire blight causes the branches to turn black, and it ravaged the orchard last year. These varieties are relatively resistant, but not totally.

The blight hasn't been bad this year.

We prune them in February, taking enough of the branches off to be able to throw a Frisbee through the tree. That and a little bush hogging in summer is all the tending they get. Dessert pears are as good as it gets.

Pare off the bad spots, and (since one won't be enough) enjoy a pair of pears.