Cherries in Tunnels
Why Cherries?

- Customer Demand
- Suited for Pick-Your-Own
- Filled gap in existing harvest season
- Premium Price
Why Tunnels?

- Keep trees healthier and fruit dry
- Reduce bacterial canker & fungal infections
- Improve fruit quality – reduce cracking
- Manage harvest – pick at desired ripeness
- Allow customers to pick in rain
- Lower pesticide usage
- Bird protection
Tunnel Specs

- 84’ wide by 900’ long
- 3 bays
- Luminance poly
- Smart Ends and tall legs
Tree Layout

- Gisela 5 rootstock
- 6’ x 8’ spacing
- 3 row bed system
- Staked
- Buried drip irrigation
Second Leaf Trees - Fall 2006
Timeline

• Planted trees
  Spring 05 & 06
• Built tunnel Fall
  06
• Skinned tunnel
  Spring 07
• Harvested first
  crop June 08
Tree Training Objectives

- “Bottle Brush” – Zahn Vertical Axis
- Flat branches – horizontal crotch angle
- Tree height at 10-12’
- Keep tree in its space
Lateral Development

Bud removal
Scoring w/Promalin
Clothespins
Pruning

- Early lateral management is critical
- **Summer Pruning**
  - Manage tree size
  - Crop load management
  - Light management
- **Dormant Pruning**
  - Fruiting wood renewal
Dormant Pruning

- Invigorates
- Renew branches – 25%/year
- No laterals > ½ diameter of leader
- Leave 3” stub cuts to reduce risk of canker
Summer Pruning

- Non-invigorating
- Top trees to control height
- Take out shading branches
- Tip current years growth by 1/3 – reduces future crop load
THE MONEY

- Tunnel $55,000 $0.75 - $1.00/SF
- Trees $12/tree planted & staked
- Yield - average 15 lb/tree at 5th leaf
- 800 trees x 15 lbs = 12,000 lbs
- 12,000 lbs x $3.50 = $42,000
Winter Poly Storage
Challenges

• Unpredictable Weather
• Lateral Development on trees
• Controlling tree size
• Spray coverage
• Temperature and humidity control
The Positive

- Customers love the tunnels
- Willing to pay higher price
- Picking in the rain
- Limited cracking
- Early Harvest
- Healthy trees
- Frost Protection?
- Pruning under cover
- Lower spray rates
Changes for Next Time

- Fewer trees
- Cover at beginning
- UFO training system?
- Shorter tunnels
- Side curtains?