

# West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Association



July 2018

Dear Association Members,

The 2018 annual meeting is behind us and the tasks of summer are all consuming as the saying goes “you have to make hay while the sun is shine”. I want to thank everyone the participated in the grading workshop and the folks that attended the annual meeting. It was an action packed couple of days that was a little bumpy at times but I feel good about the attendance and am hoping that we will continue to see greater numbers at next year’s May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019 annual meeting. I cannot give enough thanks to Tom Salvetti for his work in securing our space and handling the details for the weekend.

As discussed during the meeting the West Virginia State Fair is quickly approaching and we will need as many members as possible to volunteer to promote the association and sell Maple Cotton Candy at the fair. It is imperative that we have members in attendance for each day of the fair and that the booth always be attended. Revenues from the sales go directly to the association to be used by the association. The WVDA has graciously afforded us a great opportunity that I encourage all to participate and promote our industry to fair goers.

Speaking of opportunities I hope all are planning on taking advantage of another tremendous opportunity that is taking place in Summersville, WV on September 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. That’s right; the Southern Syrup Research Symposium will be taking place in our back yard and will bring some of the top names in the Maple world right here to us. Don’t miss out register today!

I hope all have a safe and productive summer tiding up your woods and prepping sugarhouses for the 2019 season. I look forward to seeing all at the events this summer and fall. As always please feel free to contact me with your questions, ideas or concerns via text, email or an old fashioned phone call.

Sincerely,  
Rich Flanigan

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rich Flanigan".

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## 2018-2019 Officers

### President

Rich Flanigan

### Vice President

Rachel Taylor

### Secretary

Cathy Hervey

### Treasurer

Keith Heasley

## I never knew Maple Syrup could taste so bad.

Well not all of it, but those of us who attended the **International Maple Syrup Institute Maple Syrup Grading School** got to sample everything from the best to the worst. On May 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Kathy Hopkins, Jason Lilley, both from the University of Maine Extension, and Henry Marckres, Retired Chief of Consumer Protection, VT Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets, met in class with 29 WVMSPA producers to go through the finer points of grading maple syrup and judging maple competitions.



*Cathy Grading Syrup by Color*

How, you might ask, could you spend a day and a half grading maple syrup? Don't you just have to get a grading kit and compare the sample colors? Well, not so quick. First you have to check the density. Sixty-six degrees Brix is maple syrup, but 65 degrees? Nope, that does not cut it, and the reason has to do with food safety and what can and can't grow in that bottle or jug. Then there's clarity. This is nothing that will kill you, but cloudy syrup or syrup with a layer of sludge on the bottom of a bottle is unsightly, and unsightly does not sell. When it comes to color—now it's time to grab that grading kit—dark to light it's all alright. Color and taste do go together and range, in the new IMSI grading system, from “*Golden with a delicate taste*” to “*Very dark with a robust taste.*” Determining the best maple flavor is akin to determining the best music. To quote Duke Ellington when asked about music, “*If it sounds good it is good.*” In the case of maple syrup, if it tastes good it's “Grade A” with recognized differences in taste preference.



*Phillip & Nancy measuring syrup density*

But, what about when it tastes bad? Course instructor Henry Marckres has spent his career tasting maple syrup, some of which was really, really, bad. Bad enough to have, in three instances, landed Henry in the hospital. He did not bring any of that “emergency room special” syrup with him, but we all did get to taste some less than ideal flavored maple syrup. We sampled off-flavors that included a hint of buddyness, a metallic flavor, plastic flavor, moldy syrup, a flavor identified as metabolism, and my least favorite of all cigarette smoke infused maple. That last one tasted like someone had washed an ashtray in the maple syrup. We learned what causes these off-flavors, and more importantly how to make sure the syrup we sell does not have them.

Kathy, Jason and Henry stayed around Saturday afternoon to work with the new Maple Grading School graduates to judge the maple products at our WVMSPA annual meeting competition. Our instructors left West Virginia the next day, leaving behind the knowledge needed to assure that WV continues to produce the highest quality maple syrup, and 29 well qualified maple judges for future competitions.



*Henry tasting West Virginia Maple Syrup*

## Highlights from 2018 WVMSPA Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting was held May 19, 2018 at beautiful Jackson's Mill located in Jane Lew, WV. Attendance tipped 41 (counting our two little next generation fellas). Our meeting was preceded by a 1 ½ day Maple Grading Workshop for producers interested in learning about grading their syrup. Valuable knowledge was gained from the expert instructors Kathy Hopkins, University of Maine Cooperative Extension and Henry Marckres, Chief Consumer Protection, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. A shout out goes to Tom Salvetti for taking care of all the arrangement to host the Maple Grading Workshop and WVMSPA Annual meeting.

**WVMSPA new logo** was a crowd pleaser. Members are interested in exploring options to get bottles printed with the new logo similar to neighboring States.

**ACER GRANT** – Many hours spent has paid off. WVMSPA was awarded a highly competitive USDA grant that will continue to move our association forward. A huge thank you to Mike Rechlin, Cindy Martel, Jamie Schuler and all others.

**Southern Syrup Research Symposium** is will be held Sept. 28 and 29. Top notch maple experts will be presenting both days. To register go to [www.syrupsymposium.com](http://www.syrupsymposium.com)

**STATE FAIR** – Once again members have the opportunity to sell their maple products at the WV Country Store on consignment. WVDA is again providing us space to operate our cotton candy machine. All members are asked to donate their time. Brandon Daniels has graciously agreed to organize workers. Last years fundraiser made \$2700! Let's top that in 2018. WVMSPA is sponsoring a new contest "Savory Maple Contest". Prize money will be awarded! Good Luck to all.

**2019 International Conference NAMSC** will be held in Concord, NH Oct. 26-29. 2018 Delegate Mike Rechlin, Alternate Jamie Schuler and Cindy Martel will be attending.

**MAPLE DAYS 2019** February 23 and March 16

**Annual Meeting 2019** May 4<sup>th</sup> at Jackson's Mill

**Officers elected** 2018-2019 President: Rich Flanigan, VP: Rachel Taylor, Secretary: Cathy Hervey Treasurer: Keith Heasley

**Board of Directors with terms:** Adam Taylor, Chad Trent, Paul Ronk, Mark Bowers, Tom Salvetti, Britney Hervey-Farris, Philip Lee, Mark Kimble

Thank you to Ed Howell for providing members an opportunity to have their hydrometers tested. This was a wonderful addition to our meeting. Our annual meeting concluded with a dinner at the Dining Hall. President Rich Flanigan presented awards to the winners of this year contest. Food and fellowship was enjoyed by all. There never seems to be enough time for members to talk, share stories and ideas with each other. *NOTE: we have 51 paid members to date!*

## “Welcome to Wild and Wonderful West Virginia”



This fall the WVMSPA will be welcoming the maple world to our State. By hosting the **Southern Syrup Research Symposium** we will be bringing the best maple researchers, extension specialists, and experienced producers to our area to focus attention on the issues and opportunities for the expansion of the maple industry in the Central Appalachian region. It's an opportunity to learn, to share, and to put out the “welcome mat,” for the maple community to come down and see what we are doing as an expanding industry.

The **Southern Syrup Research Symposium** is being held September 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> in Summersville, WV.

Friday there will be presentations by maple experts on their research and practical experiences. These sessions, titled “the science behind the sweetness” will help us to understand the “state of the art” of sap collection and syrup processing. Presentations will address the production issues and opportunities unique to our region. All of us will have the opportunity to listen and learn, as well as ask questions we may have relating to the topics being presented.

Friday evening we are planning a West Virginia Welcome mixer and square dance. The band is choreographing a special dance for this event called the “Maple Syrup Real.”

Saturday is build around a series of panel discussions led by experts, but relying on participation by all in the room. Panel discussion topics include: Sanitation, Agroforestry, Entrepreneurship and marketing, Sorghum production, Technological innovations, and Alternative tree syrups. There is also a session planned for producers to share their experiences and experiments, and a plenary session on climate change and maple.

The symposium schedule, details on invited speakers, and registration instructions are available at the website <http://www.syrupsymposium.com>

## 2018 Season - What Might have been.....

Brandon Daniels

Many producers started tapping around the middle of January despite the cold temperatures that had been in place since the first of November. Some producers in the lower elevations saw some good runs the last two weeks of January and produced a significant amount of maple syrup. Many days during these two weeks were perfect sap temperatures, but frost in the ground hindered sap flows until the last week of the month.

February ushered in the fourth month in a row of cold temperatures with some days having perfect temperatures for sap flow. The temperatures from the already colder than normal winter pointed to a long and promising season. By the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month, nearly everyone was fully tapped and seeing some good sap flows. Even in the colder areas, there was enough warmup some days for a few hours of sap flow most days. Then came the third week of February, which ushered in seven straight days with temperature highs in the 60's and 70's for most of the state with some producers seeing temperatures as high as 85 degrees.

Some years, many producers are still frozen up the third week of February with little or no syrup being produced. This was the second year in a row that we experienced similar temperatures on the same week as last year. This proved to be a death blow for most producers in elevations below 1,200 feet. Producers in the higher elevations let sap run on the ground and many re-drilled slightly deeper tapholes to clean out all the yeast out of the tap holes and spouts.

After that week, temps went back to below normal and remained until nearly the middle of April with March proving to be one of the coldest on record. Producers in the lower elevations with warmer sugarbushes only made 25% to 50% of a normal crop. Most producers in the colder areas and elevations about 2,500 feet had a decent season with 70% to 100% of a normal crop. Overall, the statewide average was about 60% of an average crop. Producers that were vigilant in the woods fixing leaks and maintaining high vacuum levels faired the best. If not for the one week in February, West Virginia would have likely had a record crop with producers being able to make syrup up to 10 weeks. Despite the week of extreme temperatures, three of the states top 6 producers in 2018 were able to stretch the season out to approximately 8 weeks by re-drilling slightly deeper and this increased the sap flow tremendously during the latter part of the season.



### **Daniels Maple Products** *Serving All of WV & VA*

We carry a large selection of WV Jugs, 3/16" & 5/16" tubing, mainline, mainline fittings and many other in-stock supplies. We ship anywhere and can order any size reverse osmosis, evaporator, tank or other manufactured items. Please give us the opportunity to serve you.

1747 Morris Branch Road, Dawson, WV 25976  
(304) 575-7266 [wvmapler@suddenlink.net](mailto:wvmapler@suddenlink.net)

## Tim Wilmot, the “Prophet of 3/16” Returns

Three years ago Tom Wilmot, then with the UVM Proctor Maple Research Center, traveled south to give two workshops to WVMSPA members on research he had been conducting on sap collection using 3/16 inch tubing and natural vacuum. Tim’s visit changed the maple industry in our state. To create a natural vacuum with 3/16 inch tubing you need slope, and if there is one thing West Virginia has, it’s slope.

This coming August 25<sup>th</sup>, Tim will be returning to our area for an update on 3/16 research. Hosted by the Laurel Fork Sapsuckers in Monterey, Highland County, Virginia, this educational opportunity is being sponsored by Dominion and Grimm Maple with additional support from the WVDA Central Appalachian ACER access grant.

This workshop is a great opportunity for WVMSPA members to join with our Highland County Virginia neighbors to learn about 3/16 natural vacuum systems and their potential to increase sap and syrup production in our region. *See enclosed workshop flyer for details.*

## Finding Help

The Metz’s

For the past four falls my “third job” has ended on a Saturday night in early December under the lights of a football stadium in the great state of West Virginia. The team and staff would celebrate the final victory or anguish over the final defeat then go our separate ways. However I would be seeing a number of these boys again very soon.

The day after the final game my body would be involved in selling Christmas trees but my mind was only focused on one topic: How do we get ready for maple season on time since the entire fall was devoted to the pigskin and mentoring young men???? I knew that there would be a few hectic weeks of Christmas tree selling, a few good nights sleep at Christmas then hard at it getting prepared for the magic of maple season. But how to get it all done???

We grew from 1100 taps to 1700 then to 7000 then to just shy of 8000 for the 2018 season so the need for help grew tremendously each and every year with the majority of it needed in the woods.

We all know how difficult it can be to make maple syrup in WV. The sugar content for many of us is low, and the weather can best be described as volatile and erratic. I’m certain Mother Nature has sniffed copious amounts of model glue the past few years. One thing that is also a significant challenge for us is finding help. Unlike many parts of the northeast where making maple syrup is a right of passage and where you can find an army of knowledgeable helpers within a few miles, it is not that way in West Virginia.

Sooooo..... Where in the world do we find help and specifically help where it counts...in the woods!

I found a lot of strong dependable help in the St Marys High School football locker room. Many of these young men like to be outdoors (trust me it is a huge challenge to prep a football team during Thanksgiving week...ie rifle season) and they are in shape. In addition they are getting to the point in their young lives where they like to earn a little money and get a little work experience to boot. The experience has been great. They like to spend time together in that setting and don't mind being out there on the coldest of days. These boys would bring other friends of theirs as well if I needed more help.

For the past 4 years we have had a number of high school juniors and seniors do everything from pull mainline to wire tie, install saddles, install drops, find/fix leaks as well as tap and pull spouts. There is no way we could have gotten everything done without these young men and their significant contributions. The only thing that we have not had them do was actually pull the laterals because tree recognition is critical in that activity.

I said the experience was great but certainly not perfect. I have learned a lot about how to better prep them, instruct them and follow up on their work. Every year the knowledge gets better and their efficiency gets better. This year we will spend even more time (and already are) working with them on how to different things and be problem solvers of their own to be a bit more independent in the woods.

My recommendations to anyone looking to go this route:

- 1) Provide them with all proper equipment and show them how to use it, then have them model it for you
- 2) Be with them while they are working as much as possible. Let them see the pace you expect them to work at and check their work while they are doing it.
- 3) Exercise some patience with them....a lot of them have never even used a hand tool other than maybe a screwdriver or hammer so working with all of this stuff is foreign to them though second nature to us. 15 extra minutes can save 4 hours down the road.
- 4) Pay them well. They will come back and will work harder for you. This isn't a 9-5, 40hr/week job for them so we aren't out a bunch of money but they can certainly add a lot to the bottom line.
- 5) You may laugh at this one....FEED THEM. High school boys love to eat and for all of them the lunch meal is the highlight of the day.
- 6) Invite them back when things are kickin in the woods and sugarhouse to see the fruits of their labor.

So when the clock hits 00:00 on the fourth quarter of the final game again this fall my thoughts will soon go to "what do we need to finalize to get ready for maple magic". There will be no worry, no anxiety or concern because the team will be there to enjoy the time together, get the work done and be ready for maple 2019!

## Sycamore Syrup Anyone?

Mike Rechlin

There has always been a rumor among my syrup-producing friends up north that you could make syrup by tapping sycamore trees. But with few sycamore trees in the area, nobody knew anyone who had ever made any. In theory any diffuse porous hardwood will produce a sweet sap in the springtime, but theory and practice often don't quite align.

While at the Clay maple seminar this past fall I mentioned sycamore syrup, and two participants called out that they grew up on the stuff; that their grandfathers always had a bottle of sycamore syrup on the cupboard. Somewhat astonished I asked what it was like? The answer; sweet, light-colored and tastes like butterscotch.

Jeremy Ray, maple class graduate and new WVMSPA member, was at that seminar. Later on, while working on his property, he knocked a branch of a sycamore tree, looked up and saw sap dripping. This was quickly followed by a little drill work and the tapping in of a spout. You can see the results in the accompanying picture of Jeremy's son. Interest grew, and we now have four new WVMSPA members in a sycamore syrup research group. Steve Bowers, showed up at our Parchment valley maple course residential kind of by mistake. He came looking for a different veterans affairs sponsored program that was cancelled. We invited him to stay for our course, and by the end of the day Steve enrolled in the course. Steve is enthusiastic about maple, his only problem is that he does not have maple trees on his property. But he sure has a bunch of sycamores, and plans on tapping them this spring. Our new member Kathleen Armstead has collected sycamore sap this fall, and boiled it down to make a few ounces of syrup. Looking forward to opening up a new tree syrup market, she has named her operation "Sycamore Joy Juice." Finally, Daniel Taylor of Future Generations University plans on tapping sycamore on his property in Franklin. We formed these folks into a sycamore syrup research group, where they can share what they are learning, such as when the sap runs, the volume to expect, and the brix, with each other as we all learn about this potentially new and unique WV tree syrup.

But that's not all. Has anyone checked the price of birch syrup recently? You can easily get \$60 for a gallon of maple syrup, but go to Amazon.com, and you'll see that Yellow birch syrup is selling for over \$3.50 an ounce. That comes to \$448 per gallon!!! Armed with that knowledge, it did not take long for WVMSPA new member Kyle Mills with Experience Learning (ES), to start running tubing through their Spruce Knob black birch stand. Again, this is an experiment. With 18 trees on tap, and the potential for ES to really expand, we need to know about the timing and sweetness of the black birch sap flow.



*John Ray, son of new WVMSPA member Jeremy Ray enjoys a drink of sycamore sap from an early season (November) tapping experiment, after testing its sugar content. Brix 1.5 degrees.*

## West Virginia Brings Maple to the Classroom

Making maple syrup is more than an emerging industry in our State. It's part of our history and culture, its science, technology, and applied math. Sugaring builds community, it's hard work, and it's fun. For all those reasons the process and the product of maple syrup making is a natural activity to enrich an academic environment.

As an initiative funded through our USDA Acer Grant, the WVDA and WVMSPA members partnering with schools and teachers, began a program to bring maple and the process of maple syrup making into the classroom. We initiated this program in five schools, but the demand for the program resulted in eight schools participating this first year. Each school partnered with a WNMSPA member sugarbush in offering the program. Participating schools, with classes ranging from kindergarten to college, and their partnering sugaring operation were:

Zela elementary – Jeremy Ray, *Gauley River Maple Works*

Pocahontas HS, Forestry Class – Adam and Rachel Taylor, *Frostmore Farms*

Brooke HS, Environmental Science – The Hervey's, *Family Roots Farm*

St Mary's HS, Voc. Ag Class – Chris Metz, *Cedar Run Farm*

Pendleton HS – Ricky Harper, *Cool Hollow Maple*

Barrackville Elementary, Kindergarten class – Tom Salvetti, *Hitt Farms*

Potomac State College – Ed Hartmen, *Indian Water Maple*

Highland County – Missy Moyers-Jarrells, *Laurel Fork Sapsuckers*

WVDA supplied each school with spouts, buckets, a thermometer, and an electric soup pot to boil sap. Participating sugarmakers assisted the teacher and students in tapping 5 trees on the school property, served as a reference for questions about maple and making maple syrup, and invited their partnering class to their operation to see how it is done. In many instances the students collected sap from their trees and exchanged it for an equivalent amount of syrup produced by their partner operation to host a maple party on campus. See the two accompanying reports on Zela Elementary and Pocahontas HS to see how the program worked.

The plan is to grow the program by adding more schools next year. If you know of a school or teacher that would be interested, and would like to take part in this program get in touch with Mike Rechlin, and we'll sign you up.



*Forestry Teacher Scott Garber  
with Maple tapping supplies*

### Maple in the Classroom at Pocahontas County High School

Pocahontas County High School "officially" participated in maple in the classroom for the first time this year with Frostmore Farm. In years prior, Mr. Scott Garber, PCHS Forestry teacher, had brought his "completer" (kids that have taken all forestry classes offered) kids over about once a week and helped with various things. Usually this happened on Fridays and it was dubbed "Frostmore

Forestry Fridays" This year he had a fresh new group of kids that had not helped in previous years. They also expanded their in their maple participation by tapping their own trees at the high school property. Here they gathered over 140 gallons of syrup! (Even with over 30 missed days of school -mostly during maple season.) They brought their collected syrup to Frostmore Farm. When they would come over for field trips they helped with leak monitoring, and watched the evaporation and finishing process. They also got to try the whole line-up of maple goodies offered by Frostmore Farm - candy, cream, sugar on snow, maple balsamic, and cotton candy. They sampled their sap, sap that had been run through a reverse osmosis machine and finally tried store bought high fructose corn syrup vs. their own maple syrup. Mr. Garber is always excellent to work with and the close proximity of PCHS and Frostmore Farm makes it a great partnership. It was really interesting for the kids to realize how much income could be generated from maple trees vs. traditional timbering. The PCHS students ended up with 3 gallons of finished syrup and they plan on eating it and using it as fundraisers for the forestry program.

## Maple in the Classroom at Zela Elementary

Working with local producer Jeremy Ray, Gauley River Maple Works, students at Zela Elementary School, Nicholas County WV, were able to participate and gain hands-on experience during the 2018 Maple Season. The students of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes were taught the basic process of making maple syrup. The students learned maple tree identification and how to tap a tree and collect the sap. The students tapped 5 maple trees and the classes took turns checking and collecting the maple sap from the buckets. The students were able to incorporate classroom lessons in math, science, reading and art with what they were learning about making maple syrup. A couple factors during the 2018 Maple Season caused classes to be canceled during most of the season, however the students were always eager to participate and retained much of the knowledge gained from the experience and looking forward to the next maple season.



## Maple in Vanuatu

Mike Rechlin teaching Maple in Vanuatu, and island country in the South Pacific. Working towards his lifetime goal of never seeing a pancake embarrassed by the taste of an artificial sweetener. After the lecture all the kids were treated to a piece of Mark Bower's maple candy. 10



## New Memberships

WVMSPA would like to WELCOME OUR NEWEST Members to the Association

Chad Trent - Trent Family Farm  
Experience Learning Inc.  
Future Generation  
Gregory Christian - Toms Creek Family Farm  
Herman Hill – Estep Branch Sugar Bush  
James Keith Mick  
Jeremy S. Ray - Panther Mountain Farm dba Gauley River Maple Works  
Joan & Larry Rine - Great Oak Farm  
Kathleen Armstead - Spikenard Farms Syrup: Sycamore Joy Juice  
Matt Atkins - Halstead Farm Maple Products  
Nyoka Morey - Moonstruck Maple  
Peter Gregg – The Maple News  
Steven Bowers - Moonhaven Farm, LLC  
Thomas Bryant - Camp Hidden Meadows  
Tim and Terry Duff- Fair Lawn Farm LLC  
Tim Combs - Leader Evaporator  
Tina Barton – Croager Patrick



WV Maple Producers Association welcomes the newest maple baby – Grady Frederick Farris arrived December 4, 2017. Grady is gearing up for his first maple season with his parents Charlie and Britney Farris and grandparents Fred and Cathy Hervey at Family Roots Farm Sugarshack.

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FutureGenerationsUniversity  
Future.Edu

Published By North Mountain Press

West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Association  
**Membership Application 2018**

Purpose:

“The purpose of the West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Association is to promote, educate, and research the maple and other tree syrup as well as value-added syrup products throughout West Virginia.”

Membership:

“Membership is open to persons interested in maple or firms engaged in any phase of producing, processing and/or marketing maple syrup, and/or tree syrups and value-added products of maple syrup and other tree syrups.”

**We invite you to join with us as we learn and promote our industry.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm/sugarhouse name: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership category (check one):

\_\_\_\_\_ West Virginia members. (With full voting rights).

\_\_\_\_\_ Associate and Honorary members. This category is for friends from other states who want to join our organization. (Without voting rights)

\_\_\_\_\_ I give permission for my contact information to be shared with paid members.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my permission to share my contact information with paid members

Address:

Phone number:

Cell:

Email address:

**Annual dues: \$25** includes:

- Maple Syrup Digest Subscription
- Biannual Newsletter
- Workshops on relevant sugaring topics
- Participation in WV annual maple weekend

**Do you prefer?** \_\_\_hard copy of WVMSPA newsletter \_\_\_electronic copy only \_\_\_both

Complete application and submit with your annual dues of \$25 by January 31, 2018  
(make checks payable to WVMSPA) to:

Cathy Hervey 100 Fernwood Drive, Wellsburg, WV 26070

NOTE: If you are not a paid member of the WVMSPA this will be your last hard copy of our Newsletter because of the expense of mailing. Everyone will still receive an electronic copy

West Virginia Maple Syrup Association  
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