

The heat wave that scorched Western Canada last week severely damaged fruit crops in the Okanagan and Fraser valleys, as the province's two major fruit-growing regions saw multiple days of temperatures above 40°C (104°F).

Pinder Dhaliwal, president of the B.C. Fruit Growers Association, estimates that 50 to 70 percent of cherry crops were damaged in the heat wave, [CBC](#) reports.

Dhaliwal said that apples, apricots and other stone fruits have also been damaged, though to a lesser degree.

According to Dhaliwal, the heat wave "cooked" cherries right in the orchard, noting that they are brown in color with burnt leaves and dry stems.

"It seems like somebody took a blowtorch to it and just singed it," says the orchardist from Oliver, in B.C.'s southern Interior.

Dhaliwal added that because nighttime temperatures were also high, the cherries did not have time to cool down between the sweltering days. Some cherries that look good on the outside have been cooked on the inside and are hot right to the pit, he said.

Sukhpal Bal, a fruit farmer in Kelowna and president of the B.C. Cherry Association, noted that there was a heavy cherry crop this season before the heat wave, one of the best he has seen in 20 years of experience.

"It's just so discouraging to see that this heat wave came in and literally cooked a lot of the cherries." Bal said his cherries are also discolored, with burnt skins.

"It's not pretty, it's not something that can be marketable by the time we get to harvest these cherries."

Bal said most of the cherries are too damaged to even be used for juices or purees.

While there a lot of cherries are still in good shape, Bal said that they will have to see how they ripen as the heat continues.

Raspberries and blueberries have taken the biggest hit at David Mutz's Abbotsford farm in the Fraser Valley east of Vancouver.

"The plants are literally just cooked. You can pull the leaves off and they just crinkle in your hands," he said. Mutz noted the most drastic damage was caused over the three-day period

between Saturday, June 26, and Monday, June 28.

Mutz estimates that 75 percent of the early raspberry crop and between 10 and 30 percent of the blueberry crop are of such poor quality that they can only be used for juice.