

A REPORT FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
March 2012

Spotlight on Annie's Project Graduation at Rutgers EcoComplex

"Annie's Project 2012" held its graduation ceremony at the Rutgers EcoComplex in Bordentown, NJ, on March 19. Seventy-five women farmers received certificates for completing this year's farm business management course, directed by Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) and held concurrently in Burlington, Cumberland, and Somerset counties through distance learning technology implemented by the NJAES **Office of Continuing and Professional Education (OCPE)**. **Robert M. Goodman** (executive director, NJAES) reminded the graduates of their relevance to agriculture in New Jersey and emphasized the importance of RCE in real-world outreach. Graduates and their guests enjoyed a meal donated by Farm Credit East, whose Senior Loan Officer Mark Kiriluk gave an overview of how his organization can help New Jersey women



Graduates of the Cumberland County class with **Jenny Carleo**, seated

specialist in farm financial management), **Barbara O'Neill** (extension specialist in financial resource management), **Nicholas Polanin** (agricultural and resource management agent



Graduates of the Somerset County class with **Nicholas Polanin**, seated

Master Gardener coordinator, Cape May County) and **April Lippert-Faczak** (off campus farm management administrator; Annie's Project 2011 graduate). Funding for this project was provided by the USDA's Risk Management Agency. Visit the Annie's Project website <http://aesop.rutgers.edu/~farmmgmt/anniesproject.html>.

farmers. The 2012 Annie's Project was directed by **Jenny Carleo**

(agricultural and resource management agent, Cape May County). The project team included **Robin Brumfield** (extension

Somerset County; coordinated the Somerset County class), and **Meredith Melendez** (senior program coordinator, Mercer County; coordinated the Burlington County class), **Jennifer Matthews** (Rutgers

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Spotlight on “Grape Expectations” Symposium

Rutgers NJAES supports New Jersey Wine Industry

On February 25, Rutgers Cooperative Extension conducted the annual *Grape Expectations* symposium at the Forsgate Country Club, in Jamesburg, NJ, for the New Jersey wine industry. This was the 28th year of this symposium, an integral part of NJAES' outreach efforts to this rapidly



expanding industry. There were close to 90 attendees for this day-long event, which is chaired by **Gary Pavlis**, (agricultural and resource management agent, Atlantic County). The symposium featured a broad spectrum of topics presented by both invited speakers and Rutgers extension specialists.

The morning session of the symposium focused on viticulture. Dr. Wayne Wilcox, a highly respected grape pathologist from Cornell University spoke about the difficult 2011 vintage and presented strategies to avoid crop loss in future vintages. Mid-Atlantic vineyard owners consider 2011 the most difficult vintage in the past 10 years. **Peter Oudemans** (specialist in plant pathology at the Philip E. Marucci Center for Blueberry and Cranberry Research and Extension) discussed a grape forecast model, utilizing the Network for Environment and Weather Application website. This forecasting tool ties into the existing New Jersey weather stations and gives state vineyards a powerful tool for controlling grape diseases.



Weeds are always a concern in the vineyard and **Brad Majek** (extension specialist in weed science, Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center-RAREC) outlined a weed control strategy based on his current research

on recently labeled herbicides for grapes. Majek has been extremely supportive of new vineyard owners during the establishment of their vineyards. In large part, the loss of grape plants in the first year is widely held to be the result of competition from weeds.

The afternoon session of the symposium focused on enology, the scientific study of wine and the making of wine. To that end, Sigrid Berntsen-Briand from Lallemmand, Inc., spoke on the use of Malo-lactic cultures in the winery. Lallemmand Inc. is the premiere company in the U.S. specializing in the development, production, and marketing of yeast, bacteria, and nutrients for winemaking. Berntsen-Briand is highly regarded in the industry and has been a staple at the symposium at the



request of many New Jersey winemakers. Malo-lactic fermentation is a useful tool in this cool grape-growing region because wine acid levels can be high and the cultures convert malic acid into lactic acid, which is perceived as “smoother” by the wine consumer.



Visiting viticulture professor Jim Wolpert, UC-Davis; **Gary Pavlis**; and Jesus Yuste and his wife, viticulturists from Castilla y Leon, Spain, at Hopewell Valley Vineyards, Pennington, NJ.

George Taber, the highly acclaimed author and wine columnist addressed the wineries' concerns for alternative options to the use of corks in the bottling process. Corks are expensive and, in some instances, have been found to taint the wine. Alternatives to cork are now available as described in Taber's new book titled “To Cork or Not to Cork.”

Dan Ward (extension specialist in pomology) and Pavlis highlighted current Rutgers research projects and activities that impact the wine industry. These included the multi-state evaluation of wine grape cultivars at the Clifford E. and Melda C. Synder

Research Farm in Pittstown, NJ. The focus of this research is to identify cultivars that are ideally suited to the New Jersey *terroir*. Another activity includes a grape rootstock evaluation project



Visiting Chinese students attend a viticulture lecture at Sharrot Winery, Winslow, NJ.

as well as the testing of organic disease controls at the Rutgers Fruit and Ornamental Research Extension Center in Cream Ridge, NJ. Researchers at RAREC, Upper Deerfield, NJ, investigate in-row weed control options such as fabric mulches, leaf mulches, and ground covers as an alternative to herbicides.

The annual *Grape Expectations* symposium is part of a wide range of outreach efforts by Rutgers Cooperative Extension

specialists. Ward, Majek, Oudemans, and Douglas Pfeiffer (professor and fruit entomologist, Virginia Tech) collaborate on the yearly publication of the Commercial Grape Pest Control Recommendations, which has been greatly expanded in recent years and is considered “essential reading” for vineyard owners in New Jersey. In addition, the NJAES website <http://njvines.rutgers.edu/> is a vital resource center for prospective vineyard owners to determine the suitability of their land for grape growing.



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Community Service/Faculty and Staff Activities and Accomplishments

Winter Seed and Story Swap for Novice Gardeners

A seed and story swap for novice gardeners and families was hosted in New Brunswick on March 2 by the New Brunswick Community Gardeners Coalition, which is seeking to establish a sustainable food system in the city, and the New Brunswick Community Food Alliance, which



Residents check out seeds at the Seed and Story Swap event. Photo credit: Alena D'Auria

plans to establish a food policy council for New Brunswick with the aim of creating a hunger-free community. The event featured workshops for adults on winter seed sowing and soil testing, and included a session for youth on vermi-composting (composting with worms). **Michele Bakacs** (agricultural and resource management agent, Middlesex and Union counties) spoke to gardeners about the dangers of lead contamination in urban soils and shared best practices for protecting themselves and their families while gardening. Bakacs taught participants how to take a soil sample at home and offered a free lead analysis of their yards. The free test is made possible by a grant from the U.S Environmental Protection Agency. The New Brunswick Community Farmers' Market,

coordinated by Rutgers Cooperative Extension, was established in 2009 as a joint venture with Johnson & Johnson and the city of New Brunswick, with the aim of providing the residents of New Brunswick with affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods. Managed by **Jaymie Santiago**, the market has helped to support local farmers and small entrepreneurs as well as local residents. It is an integral part of the New Brunswick Community Gardeners Coalition, which also includes with Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Middlesex County, Catholic Charities (Unity Square Partnership), and Elijah's Promise.

Nicholi Vorsa (director, Philip E. Marucci Center for Blueberry and Cranberry Research and Extension; research professor, Plant Biology and Pathology) is the principal investigator of an award totaling \$350,000 from the New Jersey Blueberry-Cranberry Research Council for a project titled "Blueberry and Cranberry Breeding Disease and Insect Management."

2nd Annual Community Gardens Conference

Rutgers Cooperative Extension once again teamed up with the Morris County Park Commission and The Friends of The Frelinghuysen Arboretum to co-host the 2nd Annual Community Gardens Conference. A capacity crowd of 127 gardeners and community garden organizers attended this educational event. Delivering the keynote address was Gary Oppenheimer, who discussed his *AmpleHarvest* website – <http://www.ampleharvest.org/> – a nationwide vehicle for gardeners to share their bounty with people in need. *AmpleHarvest* encourages and facilitates community gardeners to use the Internet to help eliminate local hunger and malnutrition. Educational breakout sessions at the conference included lectures by **Peter Nitzsche** (agricultural resource



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Cindy Rovins (agricultural communications editor) and **Peter Nitzsche** work at one of several NJAES exhibits at the conference

management agent, Morris County), **Stephanie Murphy** (director, NJAES Soil Testing Lab) and **Madeline Flahive-DiNardo** (agricultural resource management agent, Union County), who discussed wildlife control. Roundtable discussions to address community garden problems and successes were led by **Jan Zientek** (senior program coordinator, Essex County RCE) and Nitzsche. In an evaluation of the conference, 85% of attendees felt the caliber of the speakers was good to excellent while 83% thought the sessions were appropriate and informative, with approximately a quarter of those indicating "extremely so."

Mark Your Calendars!

South Jersey Twilight Tree Fruit Meeting

WHEN: April 3, 2012, 7:15 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

WHERE: Gloucester County Office of Government Services, 1200 North Delsea Drive, Bldg. A.

MORE INFO: Contact Jerome Frecon, Frecon@njaes.rutgers.edu; 856-307-6450, ext. 1.

http://events.rutgers.edu/pdfs/Evening_Fruit_Meeting_April_3_2012.pdf

North Jersey Twilight Tree Fruit Meeting

WHEN: April 11, 2012, 5:30 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.

WHERE: Rutgers Snyder Farm, 140 Locust Grove Road, Pittstown, NJ.

MORE INFO: Contact Win Cowgill, cowgill@njaes.rutgers.edu, 908-788-1339.

Bee-ginner's Beekeeping

WHEN: April 26-28, 2012.

WHAT: A two and a half-day program that provides comprehensive information and hands-on experience to help residents start and maintain a honey bee colony.

MORE INFO: Contact Dalynn Knigge, Knigge@njaes.rutgers.edu, 732-932-9271, ext. 622.

<http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu/courses/current/ae0401cb.html>

This report is produced by the Office of Communications and is available online at <http://execdeanagriculture.rutgers.edu/boa/>.

For information or to provide comments, please contact Paula Walcott-Quintin at quintin@aesop.rutgers.edu or 848-932-4204.



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