

A REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE DEAN OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
February 2014

Rutgers NJAES Snyder Research and Extension Farm has launched a new website addressing organic weed control strategies for vegetable growers. Developed by Snyder Farm Director **John Grande**, Farm Supervisor **Ed Dager**, and University of Delaware Specialist in Field and Forage Crop Weed Science Mark Van Gessel, the site provides a preliminary review of the various components of a “systems” approach to controlling weeds in organic vegetable production. Nine topics are reviewed, including tractor and hand operated cultivating implements; application technology of organic approved herbicides; mulching techniques with organic products such as composted horse manure and inorganic mulches like plastic mulch. Other areas cover the importance of understanding weed biology and weed seed dormancy to reduce weed competition; propane flaming; and stale seedbed continuous principles to reduce weed pressure. The site includes a resource center featuring linked reference material. It also includes a forum for interactive communication and exchange of ideas. Growers can participate in the information exchange by registering for the forum at <http://www.mworks.com/SARE/Forum/forum.html>. The website was partially funded by NJAES (<http://njaes.rutgers.edu>) and NESARE. It can be viewed at <http://www.mworks.com/SARE/index.html>.

“Extension Training for Agritourism Development” is a NESARE-funded project to develop and deliver educational programming to agricultural educators and service providers working with Northeast farmers interested in agritourism development. This multi-state development team is directed by **Brian Schilling**, assistant extension specialist in agricultural policy, and includes the following Rutgers personnel: **Lucas Marxen**, assistant director of research technology; and Agricultural Agents **Stephen Komar**, **William Bamka**, and **Michelle Infante-Casella**; **Meredith Melendez**, senior program coordinator; and **Kevin Sullivan**, assistant director, Office of Research Analytics. The training program is multi-tiered, comprising workshops, webinars, and web-based resources focused on: minimizing farm safety risks; managing liability; mitigating financial risk through enterprise budgeting; and improving marketing strategies. Supplemental educational resources include farm-assessment tools; a series of “Managing Risk on Your Agritourism Farm” educational videos; an online enterprise budgeting tool; and fact sheets. For more information visit <http://agritourism.rutgers.edu/training>.

“Saving America’s Farms and Farmlands: Celebrating 40 Years of Farmland Preservation,” a two day national conference that will be held in Hershey, PA, in May, is being organized by Rutgers Cooperative Extension and The Farmland Preservation Roundtable Steering Committee. **Brian Schilling**, assistant extension specialist in agricultural policy, is leading the event, with a line-up of speakers including U.S. Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr. from PA. Visit <http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu/courses/current/ap0301ha.html> for more information.

Wesley Kline, agricultural and resource management agent with Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Cumberland County, recipient of the 2014 Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award, is conducting several food safety workshops throughout the winter so New Jersey growers can continue to meet the criteria of wholesale customers. Workshops cover third party audit standards, developing a food safety plan, produce sampling results from 2013, risk assessment, and writing standard operating procedures (<https://plant-pest-advisory.rutgers.edu/?p=7949>).

Rick VanVranken, Atlantic County agricultural agent, led a food safety discussion at the Mid-Atlantic Fruit & Vegetable Conference in Hershey, PA, in January. He addressed some of the basics of the law FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) including the FSMA Fact Sheet designed to be used by growers to determine whether or



not the preventative controls apply to them. **VanVranken** also mentioned the possibility of developing alternative guidelines for crops but highlighted the need for these guidelines to be scientifically established before consideration by FDA.

Meredith Melendez, senior program coordinator, held the first annual Organic Grower Advisory at Terhune Orchards in Princeton. Twenty organic growers attended the meeting representing eight counties. The group spent the day discussing the needs of the organic growers and the current work that Rutgers NJAES is doing that fits some of those needs. It was recognized that there is potential for Rutgers to focus on the areas of reducing weed pressure in organic systems and to report research data relevant to organic farms. Participating from Rutgers Cooperative Extension were **Melendez**; **John Grande**; **Wesley Kline**; **Michelle Infante-Casella**; **Jack Rabin**, associate director of farm programs; Extension Specialists **Andy Wyenandt** and **Anne Neilson**; **Kris Holmstrom**, research project coordinator; **Brett Blaauw**, post doctoral associate and **Stacy Brody**, RCE program assistant.

Win Cowgill, agricultural agent and regional fruit agent of Hunterdon County, was featured prominently in the June 2013 issue of *Good Fruit Grower* magazine. In "Surround might deter stinkbugs," Cowgill discussed his research trial to test the effects of the kaolin clay product Surround on BMSB. In "5 things to consider when selecting a variety," Cowgill provides the key considerations for choosing apple varieties, such as time of ripening for varieties that span the season, a key consideration in Pick-Your-Own marketing. The article "Apple variety network" highlighted the apple variety database Appletesters.net, which was created by Cowgill and colleague Jon Clements, UMass educator. A repository for information on new varieties, the database allows growers to log on and view records about variety performance and also add their observations.

Jack Rabin was quoted in the *Burlington Free Press* (Vermont) regarding "How 'organic' are vegetables when they're grown in hydroponic greenhouses?" Rabin observes that hydroponic production is "a clean, sanitary and safe, healthy, high quality, resource-conserving, local, space-efficient, labor-efficient and labor-dignity, non-polluting production system in its own right." He added that "most future local and urban agriculture that becomes commercial will incorporate controlled environment practices due to land costs and protection."

In the January 2014 *Fruit Grower News* magazine, **Gary Pavlis**, agricultural agent, Atlantic County, was interviewed for the article "Pruning has a huge effect on blueberry yield." In emphasizing the importance of pruning, Pavlis referenced Phil Marucci, stating that pruning was the most significant factor to influence blueberry yields.

Of Interest:

New Rutgers Factsheets:

- FS1191. Can Animal Feeding Practices Influence Nutrient Runoff? Westendorf, M, Williams, C. <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/fs1191>
- FS1192. Storing Manure on Small Horse and Livestock Farms. Kelly, F., & Westendorf, M. <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/fs1192>
- FS1193. Managing Manure on Horse Farms: Spreading and Off-Farm Disposal. Westendorf, M. & Arogo-Ojogo, J. <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/fs1193>



Events:

Central Jersey Turf & Ornamental Institute, March 6, Battleground Country Club, Manalapan, NJ. For more information call the Middlesex County Extension office at 732-398-5262.

Hydroponic Fruit and Vegetable Production: Practical Information for Novice Growers, March 7, Rutgers EcoComplex, Bordentown, NJ. For information call 732-932-9271 or go visit www.cpe.rutgers.edu/hydroponics.

2014 North Jersey Commercial Fruit Grower Meeting, March 7, Warren Grange #10, Asbury, NJ. For program details contact Win Cowgill at cowgill@aesop.rutgers.edu. For pre-registration, contact Diana Boesch at boesch@aesop.rutgers.edu.

Visit our Rutgers NJAES online resources:

Vegetable Crops Online Resource Center: <http://njveg.rutgers.edu>

Jersey Vegetable Crops Ag Updates: <http://jerseyvegupdates.blogspot.com>

Fruit Ag Updates: <http://jerseyfruitupdates.blogspot.com>

Field & Forage Crops Nutrient Management Ag Updates:

<http://fieldforagecropsnutrientmanagement.blogspot.com>

Sustaining Farming on the Urban Fringe: <http://njsustainingfarms.rutgers.edu>

What's in Season from the Garden State: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu/archive.html>



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