

Northeast Buckwheat Growers Newsletter

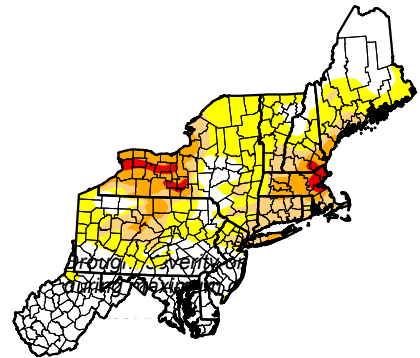
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2016 Buckwheat season

This year's crop was a story of low rainfall. An extreme drought persisted through the buckwheat season in a stretch of New York from south of Buffalo east through the Finger Lakes, with severe drought in surrounding areas. In that part of buckwheat country, the ground was often too dry to for buckwheat seedlings to germinate. Some growers made what turned out to be the right move: they didn't plant. Some who did plant in dry soil saw weak growth and negligible yield.

Fortunately, much of Pennsylvania, Eastern New York and the St. Lawrence Valley received enough



rain. In those areas, growth was excellent and the sunny days supported high yields. Several had farm-average yields of 25 to 30 bushels per acre, and even better in some fields.

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2016 Buckwheat Field Day

The 2016 Northeast Buckwheat Field Day was at the David Jones farm, near Interlaken, NY on August 24. It was yet another warm sunny day so typical of the summer.

Jones estimates that it takes a good 45 minutes to get the combine adjusted correctly. Three key points:

- Don't overload the mechanism. A small handful in each of the cups going to the bin is as much as you can expect.
- Stop the combine to check the straw before it goes through the chopper. There should be no filled seeds still attached, nor should there be any seed caught among the stems.

- At harvest, the grain moisture is not likely to go below 20%. It always needs to be dried some.



Host David Jones describes the operation of the pickup head that serves him well.

The field day was sponsored by NOFA-NY, Birkett Mills, Seedway, Cornell University.

Buckwheat history

In the late 19th century a new type of buckwheat appeared on the scene. Growers in the Northeast had been using two different kinds, common gray and silverhull. The new type with Japanese. I still get inquiries about whether this new Japanese buckwheat is any good, because they've heard bad things about it.

A lot of old records have been put online in the last few years. That access and searchability has made it possible to discover exactly what growers were saying about Japanese buckwheat in the decades after it was introduced.

They tell of the Japanese type being hardier, higher yielding, less prone to lodging, and attractive to bees. The larger kernels required adjustments at the mill.

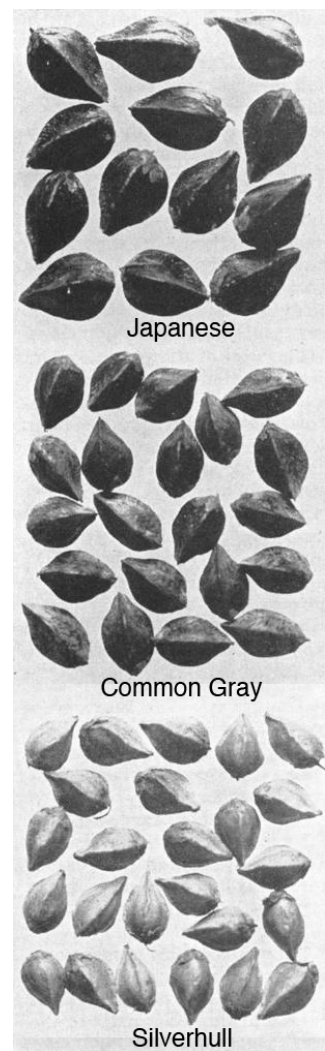
At the 1889 Michigan Beekeepers Association, the noted apiarist A. I. Root told about "Japanese buckwheat." He said that it was much better than the common and silver-hull, as they were uncertain for crops of honey and grain. Alsike clover and Japanese buckwheat are the best for honey. He thinks that it is best to drop all other kinds of buckwheat, and adopt the Japanese, as it is so much better. ' President Cook said that the Japanese variety at [Michigan State] College had done splendidly, while the common and silver-hull had done

nothing. One of the Lansing millers thought it yielded the best of any buckwheat. Some millers found it difficult to grind, as they were not prepared to handle it."

In 1890, Mr. Boxes of Indiana wrote to the American Bee Journal that he "had had the Japanese and common buck wheat growing side by side, and found the bees working just the same on one kind as on the other. On marshland, here on my place, the Japanese buckwheat stood up nice and straight, while the common was badly lodged. I shall keep the Japanese only for seed next year." The story still persists in 2016 that bees don't work the Japanese buckwheat.

In 1891, A. Pringle, president of the Ontario Bee Keepers' Association wrote "I may say here to those who have not tried it, that the Japanese variety of buckwheat is by far the best of any; and next comes the silver-hull. The former is a much larger grain, more productive, and better in every respect than the common kinds. When I took some of it to mill for cakes the miller complained that it would not go through his buckwheat sieves on account of its enormous size and wanted to know where on earth I got it." In our last variety shift, from Manor to Koto in 2001, the mill again had to adjust to larger seed sizes.

About 25 years after these comments, formal variety trials supported the yield observations. At that time, buckwheat would have been cut with a cradle, and matured in standing shock. Cutting into windrows would come later.



The three old varieties of buckwheat. From Sando, W.J. 1956 Buckwheat Culture USDA ARS. 16pp. Modern varieties are larger than the Japanese, with a notably wide base and more pronounced suture at the edges for easier dehulling.

Yield of buckwheat (bu/ac) in Preston Co. WV. Variety trials by Forrest W. Semple, University of West Virginia

Variety	1915	1916	1917	1918	Average
Japanese	41.0	11.4	37.5	20.9	25.3
Silverhull	35.9	11.7	22.7	15.4	21.4

Research news

Health benefits

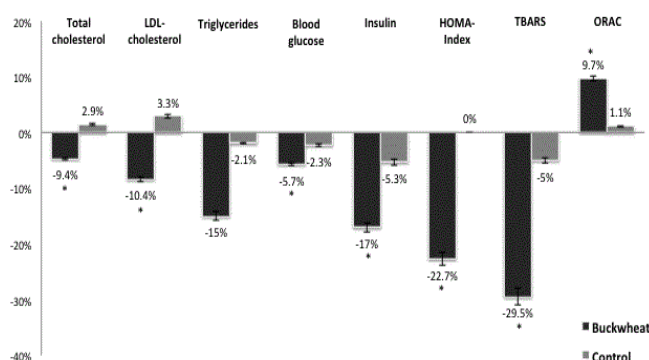
From the lab of Dr. Francesco Sofi, a specialist in the Mediterranean diet at the University of Florence, comes the first report on the effect of realistic amounts of buckwheat on some of the measures of metabolic syndrome. Previous work in Manitoba has shown promise for control of diabetes, but their human trials were not able to detect a benefit in people.

The Florentines studied people with a high risk of cardiovascular problems, and measured their lipids, glucose and inflammation. The participants were fed bread and pasta that was either whole wheat, or 40% buckwheat mixed with whole-wheat. Each week, they were asked to include in their diet a pound of pasta, 2 pounds of bread, half a pound of biscuits and 1/4 pound of crackers. In other words, a very realistic inclusion of buckwheat in a normal diet. Each person followed that program for two months with the whole-wheat foods, and a different two months with the buckwheat-enriched foods.

The result was a small but statistical reduction in cholesterol and insulin in the buckwheat diet compared two the non-buckwheat diet.

The study is the first to show these anticipated benefits for people who

might most benefit from them, on a reasonable timescale and with a reasonable amount of buckwheat in the diet. It should provide support for nutritionists and dietitians developing lifestyle recommendations that help keep people healthy in the face of this modern syndrome



Mean percentage of change in serum levels of lipid parameters, glucometabolic parameters, thiobarbituric acid reactive substances (TBARS) and oxygen radical absorbance capacity (ORAC) with buckwheat products versus control products after 8 weeks of dietary intervention (* $p < 0.05$).

Sofi, F., Ghiselli, L., Dinu, M., Whittaker, A. and Pagliai, G., 2016. Consumption of Buckwheat Products and Cardiovascular Risk Profile: A Randomized, Single-Blinded Crossover Trial. *J Nutr Food Sci*, 6(3), 8pp. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4172/2155-9600.1000501>

In memoriam

Stanley "Buckwheat" Dural passed away on September 24. His band, Buckwheat Zydeco, made many appearances in the buckwheat region of the Northeast in the 40 years that they toured out of their base in Lafayette, Louisiana. He hosted the *Buckwheat's World* on YouTube.



Stanley Dural Jr. Publicity photo

Season (cont.)

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The first crop started arriving at Birkett Mills in the middle of September. Harvest conditions have been very good, allowing harvest when the crop maturity is just right.

Many first-time buckwheat growers chose this crop because the low price of corn and soybeans made those crops unattractive. "I wanted to grow something that I wasn't

guaranteed to lose money on!" said one. Let's hope he made money on buckwheat. If some of those who had first-time success this year become regular buckwheat producers, it would be a welcome strengthening of the buckwheat-growing community.

About the Northeast Buckwheat Growers Association

The NBGA is made up of about 180 buckwheat growers in the Northeast.

Membership may be obtained by contacting the editor and providing contact information (address, phone, email). There is currently no charge to join.

This semi-annual newsletter goes out to those who have signed up as members of NBGA. The printed version is sent to

members in the Northeast, and electronic version elsewhere. The complete member list is distributed to members each fall.

The Northeast Buckwheat Growers Association has been on the World Wide Web since 1998. An on-line Buckwheat Production Guide for the Northeast and back issues of this newsletter are available there.

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