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New York Berry News

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Promising Future for the Berry Industry

By John R. Clark. Originally appeared in American Fruit Grower, December 2017

"Berries are fun and people have a nice feeling about them!" This is what my friend, the famous plant breeder, Fred Bliss, said to me the other day. Even though Fred worked mainly in vegetable breeding in his career, I always pay close attention to what he says. There are a whole lot more folks that think this way about berries. With that image, how can the berry outlook appear anything but bright?

Yet, berries are grown by farmers, and farming has its ups and downs due to common issues of weather, labor, price, competition, and a host of other potential challenges no matter what crop. I inquired recently with a number of contacts across the berry industry for some comments on the outlook for several berry crops.

Overall Comments

One of my first contacts was Mikel Hancock, the Merchandise Manager for Produce & Floral for Walmart U.S. in Bentonville, AR. "The berry category continues to be an important area driving fresh perception and quality in stores," Mikel shared. "It's one of the few commodities that consumers can eat at three meals per day including snacking occasions." He continued by saying, "the most promising aspect is the continued focus on innovation and automation. Industry leaders are testing and implementing new technologies and practices learned globally and in other industries to maintain consumer demand and deliver an unbelievable quality experience." These are very positive statements from our largest U.S. retail produce marketer.

Additionally, expansion in berry production for local markets continues. North Carolina grower Ervin Lineberger said, "consumer preference for locally grown produce has helped small growers a great deal. This, coupled with many tasty cultivars that are less suitable for shipping and using

Berry Industry Continued

growing systems that can easily be adapted to small operations, is helping high dollar-per-acre farms flourish."

I asked a range of contacts about challenges or limitations in berries. The overwhelming consensus is concern about labor. No matter what berry, or if in California, North Carolina, or somewhere in between, this major issue has everyone's attention. This likely is our greatest risk for the future of the berry industry.

In my focus on fresh market berries, I am limiting comments to the four major berries: blackberries, blueberries, strawberries, and red raspberries. I realize there are others, but they will have to wait for another column.

Blackberries

The expansion of blackberry marketing in the last 15 years in the U.S. has been a true bright spot in fruit crops. Although approximately 75% of our retail-market blackberries are imported from Mexico between October and June, domestic production has greatly increased in both local and shipping markets. Lineberger, who is located in Kings Mountain, NC, is a longtime leader in blackberry production in the East. He started growing blackberries in 1982 and has experienced a lot: varied prices, demand, supply, fruit quality, and consumer interest. He currently markets primarily wholesale for shipping.

"Now in 2018, the whole blackberry industry seems to be the most healthy overall than at any time since then," he said. "The blackberry in 1982 was considered a minor specialty fruit. Now it's a mainstream item."

He mentioned there are many reasons for this emergence, but chief among these is the quality of the fruit produced with much better cultivars. Of course, this is music to my ears as a plant breeder who has had the opportunity to be involved in blackberry cultivar improvement. Scott Norman with Naturipe Farms in Salinas, CA, who works in the wholesale market, says Naturipe is forecasting limited to moderate blackberry growth over the next five years due to grower profitability. Scott continues to be excited about domestic blackberries, and believes all berries are still a hot commodity for retailers.

"There are people in the industry excited about blackberries that are wanting to educate the consumers with the health benefits blackberries bring," he said.

Pierson Geyer of Hanover, VA, who grows for the local markets, continues to see strong demand for local-market blackberries. "Consumers are also typically excited about local blackberries after seeing imported fruit during the winter season," he said.

Promising Future for the Berry Industry Con't

Blueberries

We all know of the great expansion of blueberry production in the last 25 years, one of the most striking expansions of any fruit crop. I contacted Cort Brazelton with Fall Creek Nursery in Lowell, OR, for his perspective on the blueberry industry. He indicated that North American consumption continues to grow in high single digits. He says factors such as proprietary and/or private genetics are playing an increasing role in the industry. He further indicated that the price of processing berries plus freezer holdings impact fresh berry profits.

Cort shared that blueberries are largely two-thirds fresh and one-third processing on a global scale. He said blueberry industry growth remains generally supply-driven, though the "next evolutionary phases of quality and value are rising fast in many markets."

This is to be expected as all the additional acres planted in recent years come into production.

Blueberries do have an advantage over other berries in that machine-harvested berries for the fresh market are becoming more commonplace. This advantage plus an increasing popularity should continue to expand fresh market blueberries.

Strawberries

The nation's largest berry crop, strawberries, enjoy a large market share of the berry category. In light of this, my contacts for strawberries held commonly shared concerns. Hancock pointed out that the industry is "facing constraints on labor, housing, water, and rising land cost, all which are impacting grower profitability and future growth of growers. With these constraints, it becomes even more important that the industry focuses on shipping the highest quality fruit."

Carolyn O'Donnell with the California Strawberry Commission emphasized that the industry is changing. "In California in particular, there are regulatory changes that are further restricting pest control tools that have less requirements in other states and countries," she said.She pointed out that a positive aspect of the industry in California is that since 2008, more than $10 million has been invested in the Commission's "Farming Without Fumigants" initiative. Numerous research partners have worked on alternatives to pre-plant soil fumigation to avoid or control soilborne plant diseases. Additionally, O'Donnell shared, "there is a great deal of effort going into automation of various parts of the production cycle, including various harvest aids and field monitoring sensors."

It is exciting to see that innovation is underway to address some major industry issues.

Jeff Crotts in Lawndale, NC, grows primarily for the local market. He said the locally grown movement has "really helped us in direct marketing." However, he does not anticipate substantial acreage increases in his region in the coming year.

Berry Industry Continued

Red Raspberries

Fresh-market red raspberries are another crop that has experienced tremendous growth in recent years. Once largely a processing crop in the U.S., the development of primocane-fruiting cultivars has increased production to record levels. Proprietary U.S.-developed cultivars plus some new introductions from Europe have all contributed to this expansion. However, in recent years grower profits have become narrower as production has increased and has impacted expansion of plantings, particularly for the shipping market.

“My impressions on the raspberry industry in particular are that consumers are generally more excited about them when they see them available direct from the farm than in the past,” said Geyer.

Geyer expressed particular excitement about new cultivars and their impact on his farm’s production. “As we continue to invigorate the industry across North America, year-round consumption becomes easier and consumers create positive habits in incorporating raspberries into their regular diets,” he added.
With expansion of red raspberry production in Mexico in recent years, marketing has likely benefited as have blackberries from this stable supply in the U.S. “off-season.”

Final Thoughts

Healthy, fun to eat, convenient, and available all describe the image of berries today in U.S. society. High profit potential and crop diversity have been substantial benefits to growers. This provides for an overall positive outlook for the berry industry.

As in life, there are always challenges. With berries, issues such as labor, crop management, changing industry dynamics, food safety, water, and regulations are all important. All in all, it is still a time to let the berry good times roll!

Pest Update: **Spotted Lantern Fly**

This article was originally posted on the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture website http://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Plants_Land_Water/PlantIndustry/Entomology/spotted_lanternfly/Pages/default.aspx. Although not found in NY yet, monitoring and identification will be valuable looking forward.

The Spotted Lanternfly, Lycorma delicatula (White), an invasive planthopper, has been discovered in Berks County, Pennsylvania. It is native to China, India, Vietnam, and introduced to Korea where it has become a major pest. This insect has the potential to greatly impact the grape, hops and logging industries. Early detection is vital for the protection of Pennsylvania businesses and agriculture. If you live outside of the current (quarantine area) in Pennsylvania and find a spotted lanternfly, report it! Use this interactive Plant Pest Quarantine Search to see if you're in the spotted lanternfly quarantine area.

Identification:
The Spotted Lanternfly adult is approximately 1" long and 1/2" wide at rest. The forewing is grey with black spots and the wings tips are reticulated black blocks outlined in grey. The hind wings have contrasting patches of red and black with a white band. The legs and head are black; the abdomen is yellow with broad black bands. Immature stages are black with white spots, and develop red patches as they grow.

Signs & Symptoms:
Trees, such as tree of heaven and willow, will develop weeping wounds. These wounds will leave a greyish or black trail along the trunk. This sap will attract other insects to feed, notably wasps and ants. In late fall, adults will lay egg masses on host trees and nearby smooth surfaces like stone, outdoor furniture, vehicles, and structures. Newly laid egg masses have a grey mud-like covering which can take on a dry cracked appearance over time. Old egg masses appear as rows of 30-50 brownish seed-like deposits in 4-7 columns on the trunk, roughly an inch long.

What to do:
If you see egg masses, scrape them off, double bag them and throw them away. You can also place the eggs into alcohol or hand sanitizer to kill them.
Please report all destroyed egg masses on our website.

Collect a specimen: Specimens of any life stage can be turned in to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Entomology lab for verification. Submit samples with the Entomology Program Sample Submission Form.

Take a picture: A photograph of any life stage (including egg masses) can be submitted to Badbug@pa.gov.

Report a site: If you can't take a specimen or photograph, call the Automated Invasive Species Report Line at 1-866-253-7189 and leave a message detailing your sighting and contact information.

For more information and pictures:

https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/43943

https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly

A swarm of SLF adults on the trunk of a black cherry in a residential yard.
Photo Credit:
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

Adult SLF on bark.
Photo Credit: Nancy Bosold, Horticulture Educator, Penn State Extension, Berks County

USDA proposes cranberry seasonal volume control

The USDA is announcing a proposed change to the percentages of free and restricted volume control for the 2017-18 crop year for cranberries grown in 10 cranberry-producing states.

The proposed change would designate 85 percent of the crop as free and 15 percent of the crop as restricted for cranberries under the marketing order regulating the handling of cranberries grown in the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington, and Long Island in the State of New York. The proposed rule would exempt small handlers who process less than 125,000 barrels or handlers who would not have carryover inventory at the end of the 2017-18 fiscal year. It also exempts organically grown cranberries.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is issuing this proposed rule based on a recommendation from the Cranberry Marketing Committee.

The free portion of the crop may be shipped to any market, while the restricted portion of the crop must be diverted or used in noncompetitive outlets. This action would allow for the disposal of 2017-18 cranberry processed products to meet a portion of a handler's restriction, which would help prevent additional build-up of juice concentrate inventory.

The proposed rule for this action was published in the Federal Register on Jan. 2, 2018. Written comments must be received by Feb. 1, 2018.

Post comments concerning the proposed change at www.regulations.gov, or mail them to Docket Clerk, Marketing Order and Agreement Division, Specialty Crops Program, Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, STOP 0237, Washington, DC 20250-0237; or fax them to (202) 720-8938.

All comments to this proposed rule submitted by the deadline will be made available for public review and considered before any reporting requirements or information collection are finalized.

Information about the marketing order is available on the 929 Cranberry page of the AMS website.
More information about federal marketing orders is available on the Marketing Orders and Agreements page of the AMS website or by contacting the Marketing Order and Agreement Division at (202) 720-2491.

Using Whole Farm Revenue Protection to Manage Ups and Downs in the Berry Patch

Written by Dan Welch; Cornell Small Farm Quarterly

Strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries are some of the highest value crops grown on farms in New York State on a per acre basis, but it is a challenge to consistently harvest a high yielding crop that meets your revenue expectations. Berry growers face production risks like late frosts in strawberries, bird damage in blueberries, or spotted wing drosophila in raspberries. On the marketing end, risks include lower wholesale prices, rainy weekends that depress u-pick turnout, or greater competition at the farmers market that leads to lower prices. While there are tools available to help reduce the impact of production challenges, there haven't been many tools available to growers to manage market and price risk in berries.

Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) is a new type of crop insurance that was developed to give diversified farms an additional option for risk management. Berry growers can use WFRP to manage multiple forms of risk. Since many berry farms are diversified either by growing more than one berry crop or by growing other fruits and vegetables, WFRP may be a good option for berry farms in New York. WFRP is available in all counties in New York and can cover many crops and livestock products under a single policy. Currently there are no single crop insurance policies available for berries in New York, so WFRP makes crop insurance available to berry growers.

With Whole-Farm Revenue Protection, all farm revenue can be insured together in one policy, and actual revenue determines if there is a loss. Like most federal crop insurance programs, there is a premium subsidy paid by the USDA to the insurer to lower the cost of insurance to growers and to encourage broad participation. The subsidy for WFRP is based on diversification of the farm, so if two are more commodities are covered under the policy, the subsidy will be higher. This is an additional benefit for many berry growers in New York, because growers often grow several crops or commodities. Not only could you cover your berry crops, you could include sweet corn, pumpkins, and tomatoes. Also, if you cover more than three commodities, you are eligible for 80% and 85% coverage levels. Beginning farmers and ranchers can qualify for an additional 10% premium subsidy.

Your "coverage level" is the percentage of your total anticipated revenue covered by your policy. You can choose which coverage level to purchase. A higher coverage level would lead to a higher likelihood of payments, but will also have a higher premium. Lower coverage levels tend to have higher premium subsidies. As an example, say you were expecting $42,000 in revenue from two acres of strawberries; that was the only crop you insured under the policy; and you chose a coverage level of 65%. You would be insuring $27,300 of revenue. Your estimated premium would be $1,802. The total premium cost of your policy would be $4,395, but 59% of that would be paid by the federal government in the form of a premium subsidy. In other words, if your actual revenue dropped below $27,300 due to "insurable causes" such as a drop in price or bad weather, you would receive an indemnity payment. There are several factors that can influence what coverage level is best for a farm and those factors should be reviewed with a crop insurance agent.

Faculty and staff at the Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell University have a partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency to deliver crop insurance education in New York State. Crop insurance materials and decision support tools are available at ag-analytics.org to help growers analyze their options for coverage and subsidies for several crop insurance products, including WFRP.

To obtain WFRP, you will need your Schedule F for the past five years (for the 2018 closing date, taxes from 2012-2016). These records determine your Historical Allowable Revenue. If you are a beginning farmer and have been farming in the previous year, three years of taxes qualify. WFRP has provisions for growth and expansion, so if you are in a high growth stage discuss this with a crop insurance agent to ensure you are within the policy guidelines. You will also need the expected revenue for each crop you want to insure. You would work with your agent to project your expected revenue based on your actual expected prices. These may be based, for example, on producer sales records or contracted prices with a wholesaler. Examples of producer sales records are cash register records from you-pick sales, or contemporaneous records which document market sales.

A loss is triggered under WFRP when natural causes cause a crop loss and/or there is a decline in market prices that causes farm revenue to drop below the insured revenue level. If you want to know more about how Whole Farm Revenue Protection can help you manage the specific risks in your berry patch, contact a crop insurance agent. To find a crop insurance agent in your area, go to the RMA Agent Locator. The agent will need your historical tax records and your production plans for the insurance year. More information on Whole Farm Revenue Protection can be found at this USDA Risk Management Agency website. Sales of WFRP policies for New York close on March 15th of each year.

For more information and to see the original article, please visit
http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/2018/01/08/using-whole-farm-revenue/

USDA

What's in your water? Time for spring water testing, lab says

Credit: AgSource Laboratories and Fruit Growers News.

National Groundwater Awareness Week is coming up the week of March 11-17, 2018. What better time to take a sample of your well water? It's recommended that private drinking water wells be tested at least once per year, but some sources need to be tested even more frequently.

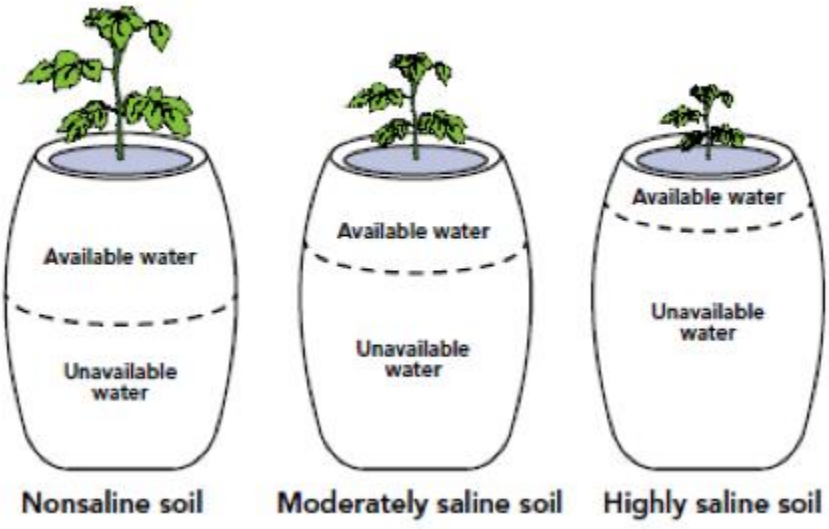
"Surface water sources or shallow wells should be tested more often, especially if you're using this water for drinking water," says Kevin Klink, Senior Manager, Laboratory Operations for AgSource Laboratories. "There's a greater risk of contamination with surface water."

Who Should Test?

Homeowners and private well owners should test annually, but agricultural operations using irrigation water should really consider taking samples as well. Measuring the salt and mineral content of your irrigation water could prevent problems and can help offer clues on how to fix issues you may be having.

"If you have poor water, treating it as you use it, rather than letting salt build up to the point it harms soil and plants, will be a great benefit in the long run," said Klink.

The quality of irrigation water directly impacts crops by affecting salinity of the soil (salt accumulation), soil pH and water infiltration rates.



When to Test

While annual testing is best, don't hesitate to test again if water quality should change, such as a difference in color, smell or taste of the water.

Water Testing Continued

Where to Test

When collecting a sample from the irrigation system, let the water run for two to three minutes before collecting the sample. This will purge static water from the system.

If several separate irrigation wells are being used, sample each well separately and identify each sample's source. This will qualify the water specifically from each well. This is important if pumping into a holding pond.

When sampling from a pond, collect water from the pumping station, if possible. Remember to let the pumping station water run for two to three minutes before collecting the sample. Do not collect the water from the side of the irrigation pond. Sediment will act as a contaminant.

What to Test

A basic annual drinking water test package usually includes two items: coliform and nitrate. For irrigation suitability testing, the package includes pH, conductivity, carbonate and bicarbonate, nitrate, chloride and Sodium Absorption Ratio (SAR), as well as micronutrients and macronutrients.

"The most important factors to test are pH, conductivity, carbonate, nitrate, chloride and Sodium Absorption Ratio (SAR)," notes Klink.

For more specific questions about mineral content or contamination, other analyses for hardness, iron, copper or lead and arsenic can be added to any testing package.

Sampling Reminders

Ensuring a quality test result always starts with a properly collected representative sample. Here are a few tips for sampling and submitting a water sample to the lab:

- Use a new, clean plastic container. Rinse the bottle (including the lid) several times with the water to be tested. Do not touch the inside of the bottle or lid.
- DO NOT use glass containers.
- Fill the bottle completely and eliminate all headspace when capping the bottle. Be sure the lid is tight so that the sample does not leak during transit. The laboratory needs at least 125 ml (about 4 ounces) of water for the analyses.
- If possible, collect and ship the samples on the same day. Cool the samples in a refrigerator if overnight storage is necessary.
- Clearly identify each sample bottle and complete the submission form before shipping.

Upcoming Events!

Are you managing your risks as a farm employer?
The compliance and safety workshop
March 22, 2018, 1:00-4:00 pm Highland, NY

Register for this Event Now. More information: https://enych.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=909

Farm Disaster Preparation Certification Program
March 28, 2018, 9:30 am – 3:30 pm Canandaigua, NY 14424

This training will cover topics such as farm equipment safety, barn fire and structure collapse, minimizing storm damage, reducing criminal activity risks, and enhancing livestock handling and biosecurity.

Register online at https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/farmprep_232 ***or call*** Nancy Anderson at 585.394.3977 x427.
For questions about this workshop contact Marie Anselm at ma88@cornell.edu ***or*** 585.394.3977 x402.

NEWA "Hands-On" Workshop: Grapes and Small Fruits
March 28, 2018, 9:30 - 11:45 am Voorheesville, NY

Pre-Registration Deadline: March 27, 2018 Register for this Event Now
More information: https://enych.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=920

20 Minute Farm Manager- Webinars
April 2 - April 11, 2018, All programs run from 12:00-12:30

Featuring the best of the Good to Great in Ag Labor Management Program. Each webinar will take about 20 minutes and provide tips and resources to help you get off to a great start with your employees this spring.

Pre-registration is required but the program is free. https://enych.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=925

2018 Worker Protection Standard Training & DEC Special Permit Training (Wayne County)
April 4, 2018 Newark, NY

English session: 8:30 AM registration; 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM
Spanish session: 1:00 PM registration; 1:30 PM - 5:00 PM

More Info and Registration:
https://lof.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=915

2018 Worker Protection Standard Training & DEC Special Permit Training (Orleans County)
April 5, 2018 Albion, NY

English and Spanish Session: 8:00 AM registration; 8:30 AM - 12:00 PM

More Info and Registration: https://lof.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=916

Navigating the Ag Labor Maze
April 12, 2018, 11:30am - 5:00pm Geneva, NY

Learn how to build better relations between farmers and workers and how to establish meaningful communication across cultures and language barriers.

Pre-Registration Deadline: April 10, 2018 Register for this Event Now Program Brochure (PDF; 605KB)

Spring Gardening Day
April 14, 2018, Columbia-Greene Community College

Join us on April 14 for our Spring Gardening Day at Columbia-Greene Community College. Our keynote speakers are "The Fabulous Beekman Boys"! We are offering a wide variety of workshops for your gardening pleasures. ***Register early and remit the registration fee by April 6.*** Register Here.

PSA Grower & Train-the-Trainer Course Schedule

•Registered PSA Grower Training Courses Newark, NY, USA: 3/16/2018
•Registered PSA Train-the-Trainer Courses Binghamton, NY: 4/25/2018 - 4/26/2018

https://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/training/grower-training-courses/upcoming-grower-trainings?utm_source=PSA+December+2017+Newsletter&utm_campaign=PSA+December+2017+Newsletter&utm_medium=email

Cornell Organic Symposium
Save the date!
April 27, 2018, 1:00 – 5:00 pm Stocking Hall, Room 148

More details to follow. Please pre-register to be sure to receive updates.

Quick Books for Farmers
April 28, 2018, 9:00am to 12:00pm Oriskany, NY

Join us for an introduction to Quick Books. You will be introduced to how Quick Books can be used as a management tool to help guide you in decision making for your farming business.

Register here by April 26th. For more details visit: http://events.cornell.edu/event/quick_books_for_farmers

Alternative Crops, Growing Demand Fueling Berries' Future

By Christina Herrick. American Fruit Grower, January 2018

Juneberries or saskatoons, haskaps, currants, elderberries, gojis, cranberries, boysenberries, wineberries, aronia berries, and mulberries. While all these seem like small pieces of the berry pie, they do make up about 20% of the berries grown by those who responded to our 2018 State of the Industry Survey.

Berries are enjoying a buoying interest from consumers and 68% of growers who responded say this exponential interest and growth can be sustained.

"Consumer demand remains strong for berries beyond typical berry season," says a blueberry grower from the Northeast. Another grower from the Northeast says the growth is "sustainable to this point."

"Continued growth will force out older, smaller, less efficient growers — just like always," the grower says.

A berry and currant grower from the West says the industry is also responding to this growth in marketing.

"It seems that the berry industry is attempting to figure out additional ways to utilize them — juices, snack food products, etc," says a berry and currant grower from the West.

A blueberry, raspberry, blackberry, elderberry, and goji berry grower from the Southeast says "I don't believe the full market potential has been realized."

This optimism is a good energy for the industry, which growers say is challenged by invasive pests like spotted wing drosophila (SWD), labor and harvesting, and pressure from lower-cost imports.

"[Growers] have to move product quickly, some producers lower prices to soon and somehow foreign berries are showing up with extremely long shelf life," says a strawberry, raspberry, blueberry, and blackberry grower from the Midwest.

"[I'm challenged] to be able to control insect and disease pressure that seems to get tougher every year. And to get more people to eat healthier, better sales," says a blueberry and strawberry grower from Southeast.

One blueberry grower from the Midwest says the challenge is "Knowing when to stop expanding." Incidentally, this grower indicated expansion of berry crops is part of the production plan for 2018.

A blackberry and blueberry grower from the Southeast says cultural practices are catching up with the industry: "The berry industry is focused on quality and yield and not improving their soil asset. Remember that the three limiting things in farming are land, labor, and time. Tack on to that most do not have an adaptation plan for their local threats."

NEWA "Hands-on" Workshop: Grapes and Small Fruits

Wednesday, March 28th 2018
9:30am- 11:45am

LOCATION:
Albany CCE Office
24 Martin Road
Voorheesville, NY 12186

COST:
$15 per person

REGISTRATION: Space is limited!

Please Register online at:
https://enych.cce.cornell.edu/events.php
Or call Abby Henderson at 518-746-2553

Attendees will learn the ins-and-outs of the NEWA system (Network for Environment and Weather Applications). NEWA is an online system that provides hourly and daily weather data, pest forecasting models, and crop production models, to help implement IPM practices on farms across the Northeast. Attendees will learn how to efficiently navigate the NEWA interface, including how to get weather data, access station specific pages, and effectively utilize models for berry and grape insects and diseases.

INSTRUCTORS:

Juliet Carroll, *NYS IPM Program*
Dan Olmstead, *NYS IPM Program*
Greg Loeb, *Department of Entomology, Cornell University*
Laura McDermott, *Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program, Cornell Cooperative Extension*
Jim Meyers, *Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program, Cornell Cooperative Extension*

Hosted by:
CCE Eastern New York Commercial Horticulture Program

Shedding New Light on Stink Bug Invasion

By Sharon Durham, Public Affairs Specialist, Agricultural Research Service in Research and Science

The invasive brown marmorated stink bug causes problems for homeowners and farmers and threatens U.S. specialty crops valued at over $20 billion. Farmers rely on insecticide sprays to reduce crop-damaging stink bugs. Another strategy is using traps with lures to capture this pest.

Finding reliable ways to attract stink bugs is a challenge for researchers. Most insects are attracted to visual and chemical cues that enhance the ability to capture them. According to Agricultural Research Service (ARS) entomologist and research leader Tracy Leskey, brown marmorated stink bugs are attracted to visual cues such as UV black lights and chemical cues such as pheromones. However, black lights also attract numerous non-target insects, making trap capture identification laborious.

Adult BMSB
Susan Ellis, Bugwood.org

Leskey's recent laboratory trials show that brown marmorated stink bugs are attracted to blue lights—lights that attract fewer non-target insect species. She also tested a combination of visually attractive blue lights with chemically attractive pheromones.

Her studies revealed that in regions like the Mid-Atlantic, which includes large high stink bug populations, pheromone-baited traps performed better than unbaited traps. Timing was important, too. During mid-season, traps containing lights captured more adult stink bugs, while pheromone-baited traps worked better during late season.

BMSB Nymph
Susan Ellis, Bugwood.org

In regions like the Pacific Northwest, which includes fewer stink bugs, pheromone-baited traps captured more adult stink bug than unbaited traps. These studies about the effectiveness of both light and pheromone-baited traps will help researchers develop more effective stink bug traps in the future.

https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2017/11/07/shedding-new-light-stink-bug-invasion

AFT awards $88,000 in grants to help new farmers

ALBANY — American Farmland Trust (AFT) announced $88,000 in grants to seven partner organizations in the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network (HVFN) to support their work with farmers looking for land and retiring farm landowners who wish to keep their land in farming.

HVFN is comprised of 15 organizations, led by AFT, with a farmland finder website linking farmers and landowners that has been used by more than 35,000 people. HVFN offers free one-on-one assistance and has helped more than 130 farmers find land. It was launched with primary support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF).

"A two-prong approach is needed to help young and beginning farmers in their journey to finding land," says David Haight, New York State Director for AFT. "We need to make it easy for all farmers and landowners to get easy access to information. At the same time, we need experts who can help with the technical, legal, and financial issues that can stop even the most ambitious aspiring farmers in their tracks. These funds will go a long way in putting boots on the ground to support farmers and landowners."

"The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is proud to help enable the transition of farmland to the next generation of farmers in New York by supporting AFT and the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network," says Danielle Levoit, Program Officer for the Environment at DDCF. "Over the last four years, AFT has created a successful model for a network of partners coordinating to help farmers find land and protect some of our best regional farmland."

Since 2014, AFT has awarded $258,000 to HVFN partner organizations. This year's grants will support a wide range of projects that include educational and networking events, support for women farmers, site visits to evaluate soils, resources for Spanish-speaking farmers, and more.

Grant awardees include Agricultural Stewardship Association, Columbia Land Conservancy, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County, Glynwood, Orange County Land Trust, Saratoga PLAN and Westchester Land Trust.

"Being a partner in the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network has been instrumental in helping us provide matching services and expand access to farmland in Rensselaer and Washington counties," says Teri Ptacek, executive director of the Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA). "This new grant will enable us to continue to build on this important work. Our thanks to the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and AFT for making this possible."

"The Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) was extremely pleased to have been awarded funding from the HVFN Partner Grants program," says Marissa Codey, deputy director of conservation programs at CLC. "The grant award will greatly assist collaborative efforts with the Dutchess Land Conservancy and the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network to help our local farmers find long-term secure access to important agricultural resources."

"The HVFN Partner Grant allows Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County (CCEUC) to work on and deliver invaluable programming to new landowners and those looking to purchase land, as well as helps form a bridge between land owners and land seekers," says Christian Malsatzki, agriculture program leader at CCEUC. "Without the HVFN Partner Grant, CCEUC would be very limited in its ability to develop and deliver informative programming to help land owners and land seekers make informed and educated decisions."

"Glynwood is excited to advance the work supported by the HVFN Partner Grant," says Dave Llewellyn, director of farm stewardship at Glynwood. "The Partner Grant will enable us to deliver direct technical assistance and coordinate networking events to support farmland access opportunities, work which dovetails nicely with the farmer training services Glynwood provides. We look forward to supporting HVFN efforts to facilitate matches and create lasting land access opportunities."

"The Orange County Land Trust (OCLT) is so pleased to have received funding from the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network in support of our efforts to connect farmers with available farmland," says Jim Delaune, executive director at OCLT. "Our mission is to improve access to farmland in Orange County. As an HVFN partner, we benefit from collaboration with a region-wide wealth of experience."

"Support from AFT's Hudson Valley FarmLink Network program is strengthening local farmland conservation efforts in Saratoga County through a monthly training and collaboration program called 'Conservation Colleagues' convened by Saratoga PLAN," says Maria Trabka, executive director at Saratoga PLAN. "Conservation Colleagues are those people on the front line interacting directly with landowners – municipal planners, building and code inspectors, and Cooperative Extension and Soil and Water Conservation District staff. Conservation Colleagues will partner with Saratoga PLAN to accelerate the pace of farmland conservation and keep that land available for farmers in Saratoga County, the fastest developing county in New York State."

"In our first 30 years, the protection of local farmland has been a priority and it will continue to be a top priority during our next 30," says Kara Hartigan Whelan, vice president at Westchester Land Trust. "The Hudson Valley Farmlink Network grant supports WLT programs that provide resources and trainings to land-seeking farmers and growers, and enables us to assist farmland owners interested in business diversification, succession planning, and everything in between."

About American Farmland Trust: American Farmland Trust is the only national conservation organization dedicated to protecting farmland, promoting sound farming practices, and keeping farmers on the land. Since 1980, American Farmland Trust has helped to permanently protect more than five million acres of farmland and ranchland. Learn more at www.farmland.org.

Supervising Seasonal and Temporary Workers: Special Considerations

By: Elizabeth Higgins, Ag Business Management
Eastern NY Commercial Hort Program; Cornell Cooperative Extension

Most fruit and vegetable farms need to hire people on a temporary seasonal basis. The short length of time which seasonal employees will be on your farm does require some special considerations. Although these workers are only on your farm for a little while, they contribute to the success of your farm business. Below are some tips for getting the best contribution out of your seasonal farm staff.

Good Employee-Employer Relations

Although it is challenging to make time for training and orientation during the height of the season, you will increase your worker's commitment to your farm if you can get to know your seasonal employees as quickly as you can and communicate to them their value to the business and the importance of their job. The group is made up of unique individuals who do not want to be viewed as a faceless mass. At a minimum, try to learn each person's name immediately. Find out each person's interests and develop a relationship with him or her as quickly as possible. You want to establish a trusting relationship between the two of you and to develop a commitment to your farm on the part of the worker. When training is short changed, this will help to increase their confidence in coming to you with issues or concerns before they become serious problems.

Language Barriers

If you cannot speak the language of your employees, the best advice is to start learning it immediately. To get the best effort out of your employees they must be able to understand you and be able to communicate problems to you. The inability to communicate with everyone makes establishing good employee-employer relationships with your employees more challenging. The use of interpreters on farms is a common solution, but it must be done with caution. Often interpreters make inaccurate translations, do not stress the same points that you would, or change what you say to elevate their own position. This responsibility gives them a powerful position in your business. They can withhold, or share information based on their own needs. Rarely do interpreters just translate; often they also supervise groups of workers. With their control of the flow of information they have tremendous power over the people beneath them. Employee grievances may not come to your attention until they have reached unsolvable proportions.

Work Crews

Large groups or labor crews who work closely together can present another challenge. They may live and travel together developing very close bonds. They often depend on each other for food, loans, and other assistance. A supervisor's disagreement with one worker may quickly become a confrontation with the entire crew as it did on one New York farm.

One member of a labor crew was told the cost of his damaged picking-sack would be deducted from his pay. The rest of the crew agreed with the worker's story that the sack had a broken strap when it was given to him. The disagreement escalated, and the employee was ordered to return to the labor camp. To show their support of their fellow employee, the rest of the crew sat right down in the orchard and refused to work until the man could return to work.

On the other hand, a crew also knows when one employee is disrupting work or is taking advantage of you. You will gain respect of the group by dealing with this employee's behavior fairly. Other employees will support you when they see fair treatment for everyone. If they perceive favoritism or arbitrary treatment, the whole group will react. Establishing a relationship with each individual will be the determining factor. If they know and trust you, they will come to you with problems or complaints before things get out of hand.

Housing

Although good housing conditions can be used to attract workers, when you are providing housing to an employee, you need to be particularly careful about whom you hire. The process of evicting a former employee from housing which you provide can be a lengthy process. The effect of a disruptive employee on your other employees in nearby housing must be considered. Migrant farm workers reported leaving a well-liked employer because other workers at the labor camp were causing problems for them or their families.

Cultural Differences and Values Conflicts

People from various cultural and ethnic groups have different ways of viewing the world and have their own unique value system. When people from different cultures work together, you need to take the time to talk about differences. Consider these differences as you establish work rules and methods for achieving your goals. A farm worker repeatedly arrived late for work in the morning. The manager told him that the next incident meant termination of his employment. This farm worker gave rides each morning to two neighbors whose jobs started later than his. The choice of leaving his friends behind or being late for work was not even a choice to him. Of course, he would wait for his friends. Respecting the values of your employees and trying to be flexible in your operation will allow you to draw on the strengths of each person involved. Explaining your production practices and the logic behind your rules will go a long way toward preventing problems.

Resources to help:

The Eastern New York Team will be offering the Human Resource training program “Good To Great in Ag Labor Management” on four consecutive Thursdays in March from 5:00-8:00 pm (March 1-22). Registration is available on the ENYCH website: https://enych.cce.cornell.edu/events.php

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New York Berry News (**NYBN**) is a seasonal commercial berry production newsletter provided by Cornell berry team members. It is designed to help promote and strengthen commercial berry crop production in New York State. NYBN is available free of charge in pdf format at: https://blogs.cornell.edu/berries/new-york-berry-news/

Visit the NYBN web site to view back issues or to subscribe to monthly e-mail notices with table of contents and a link to the most current issue.

More on individual team members and their areas of expertise may be found at: https://nysipm.cornell.edu/agriculture/fruits/cce-programs

UPCOMING EVENTS posted on pages 11 & 12

Questions or comments about the New York Berry News?

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