



UMASS
EXTENSION



Vegetable Notes

For Vegetable Farmers in Massachusetts

Volume 18, Number 20

October 15, 2007

THE NEW ENGLAND VEGETABLE AND FRUIT CONFERENCE:

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

The New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference will be held this December 11, 12, 13 at the Radisson Hotel in Manchester, NH and will include 27 educational sessions over 3 days, covering major vegetable, berry and tree fruit crops as well as various special topics.

This conference is put together with close collaboration between growers and Extension from across the region. The steering committee gathers the best speakers from within our region and across the country to let you know about the latest innovations and advances in the fruit and vegetable industry.

Twenty-seven half-day educational sessions will mix the best theory and practice regarding major fruit, berry and vegetable crops. Every session – from “Organic Apple Production” on Tuesday morning to “Lettuce and Greens” on Thursday afternoon will include the perspective of farmers, Extension staff and researchers. A “Farmer to Farmer” session will be held after each morning and afternoon session to allow speakers and farmers the opportunity for informal, in-depth discussion of the issues they find to be most critical.

There is also an extensive **Trade Show** with over 100 exhibitors. We hope that you will enjoy your time at the conference, and meet with fellow growers, advisors, researchers, and industry representatives. We want you to leave with new ideas and new information that will have a positive impact on your farm.

The event is sponsored by the New England Vegetable & Berry Growers Association and the Massachusetts Fruit Grower's Association in conjunction with the Universities of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont and Maine, as well Cornell University and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station – in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The 3-day educational program offers 4 to 5 concurrent sessions each morning and afternoon. On **Tuesday, December 11** the sessions are on tree fruit, peppers and eggplant, root crops, soil health, strawberries, cucurbits, urban food production, season extension, and stone fruit. On **Wednesday, December 12** sessions are on tree fruit, blueberries, brambles, minor crops, renewable energy, organic production, tomatoes, and postharvest management. The sessions on **Thursday, December 13** are on non-chemical weed control, ornamentals, sweet corn, viticulture, lettuce and greens, and pumpkins.

The pre-registration fee to attend any part or all of the conference or trade show is \$70 for the first member of the farm or business and \$40 for each additional member (family or employee) when pre-registered with first member. The pre-registration fee for students (high school or college) is \$30 each when pre-registered by the instructor. **Pre-registration must be received by November 30, 2007.** There is an additional fee of \$10 per person for late registration or walk-ins.

Printed programs will be available soon. Complete information on the program, registration, trade show and accommodations is on the New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference website, <http://www.newenglandvfc.org/>. The conference website includes downloadable registration material and a list of hotels. Some hotels, such as the Radisson Hotel Center of New Hampshire where the conference is held (1-603-625-1000) and the Hilton Garden Inn have special conference rates for a limited number of rooms (1-603-669-2222). These hotels fill up quickly-- book your room right away! For registration information you may also contact Jude Boucher at 860 875-3331; email Jude.Boucher@uconn.edu.

SHELLED CORN AS A GREENHOUSE FUEL- FARM MEETING OCT. 25

This two-farm meeting will take place at 11:00 am at Walker Farm, Dummerston VT to see the corn furnace in operation and then 1:00 pm at Five Point Farm, Northfield MA to see how corn is dried, stored, and bagged. Jack Manix of Walker Farm recently installed a 165,000 Btu corn-burning furnace (www.cornheat.com) in one of his two dozen greenhouses, with the help of a small grant from UVM Extension. Although it's operated for just a short while, the fully-automated furnace seems to be working well. Jack is using local shelled corn available for \$200/ton in bags (or \$170/ton in bulk). This compares favorably with the price of propane. (Conservatively estimating 15.5% moisture content of corn and 75% efficiency of the furnace, a ton of shelled corn has the same energy content as about 133 gallons of propane.) The furnace burns very clean, and what little emissions it does produce smell like corn muffins.

The corn being burned comes from Five Point Farm in Northfield, MA (www.fivepointfarmcorn.com) about 25 miles to the south. This dairy farm in the Connecticut River Valley is milking 200 cows and also grows, dries, and stores over 1,000 tons of fuel corn. Bill Llewelyn will tell us how it's done and explain the equipment he uses for harvest, drying, storage and packaging. It may be possible for other dairy farms in the region to grow shelled corn as a local fuel for greenhouse growers in their community.

Directions to Walker Farm: Take Exit 3 off I-91 in VT (Brattleboro, Keene NH). Go 3/4 of the way around the rotary, onto Route 5 north. The farm is 3 miles up on the right.

Directions to Five Point Farm: Take Exit 28 off I-91 in Bernardston MA. Turn east towards Northfield on Route 10. Go 5 miles to the intersection with Route 63. Turn right (south), go one mile to Upper Farm Rd. on right. Five Point Farm is a half mile on right.

For more information contact Vern Grubinger, Univ. of Vermont Extension, 802-257-7967 x33, vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu

USDA ANNOUNCES ACCELERATED SIGN-UP FOR FARM CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Massachusetts farmers who would like technical and financial assistance in managing their natural resources are encouraged to apply now for the federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has been authorized to conduct an accelerated signup period for EQIP while work on the next federal Farm Bill continues.

Applications must be received by **Friday, November 12, 2007**. Farmers should call or visit their local USDA Service Center as soon as possible to begin the conservation planning process and complete the necessary paperwork. EQIP helps farmers improve production while protecting environmental quality by addressing such concerns as soil quality, grazing land conservation, irrigation efficiency and comprehensive nutrient management. "USDA is committed to providing conservation tools and resources to help Massachusetts farmers ensure that their land remains healthy and productive," said State Conservationist Christine S. Clarke. "NRCS field staff are available to help farmers develop a conservation plan to address their resource concerns." In fiscal year 2006, NRCS funded 113 EQIP contracts with Massachusetts farmers to implement \$3.86 million in conservation practices on 7,894 acres of land.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment. NRCS has seven Massachusetts field offices in Greenfield, Hadley, Holden, Hyannis, Pittsfield, Westford, and West Wareham, which work with local conservation districts and other partners to serve farmers and landowners throughout the commonwealth.

For more information about your local office contact:

Diane Baedeker Petit, Public Affairs Officer
413-253-4371; Diane.Petit@ma.usda.gov

HOW EQIP WORKS FOR VEGETABLE GROWERS IN MASSACHUSETTS

General Program Description

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offers technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers to implement conservation practices.

Any producer engaged in livestock or crop production on eligible land may apply for EQIP. Eligible land includes cropland, pastureland, private non-industrial forestland, and other farm lands as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture.

Applications for EQIP may be made at local NRCS offices and USDA Service Centers in Massachusetts.

Ranking of Applications

Massachusetts ranks and approves applications based on one statewide process, developed in accordance with national guidance and in conjunction with priorities identified by the State Technical Committee and local work groups. The state and local committees are comprised of public and private agencies and organizations interested in natural resources protection, and advise NRCS on the implementation of EQIP in Massachusetts. These committees provided input on resource concerns, practices needed to treat the resource concerns, financial incentives and program implementation.

Eligible Practices and Cost Share Rates

A list of eligible practices with variable cost share rates was developed through a practice evaluation process adopted by the State Technical Committee. Conservation practices proposed for funding were assessed based on criteria established in the 2002 Farm Bill. Practices were assessed based on typical applications across the state and the general impact on resource concerns, environmental benefit, cost effectiveness, regulatory compliance, innovation, agricultural production, socio-economic value, national program management priorities and local commodity group priorities. Practices identified as producing the greatest benefit were assigned higher cost-share rates than medium and low beneficial practices. For more information see Massachusetts EQIP Practice Evaluation Workbook.

A total of 71 conservation practices have been approved for cost-share in Massachusetts, with an average cost share rate of 68%. Practices that work to improve water quality, in general, receive 75 percent cost share, while other cost share rates range from 25% to 50%. Limited Resource Producers and Beginning Farmers may receive 90% cost share for all eligible conservation practices. Incentive payments (flat rates paid over three years) are offered to encourage adoption of management practices that are not already being applied to the land.

Some of the Conservation Practices that may be of special interest to vegetable growers include:

- Agrichemical mixing facility
- Composting facility
- Cover crops
- Deep tillage
- Fence
- Field border
- Filter strip
- Grassed waterway
- Irrigation system upgrades and irrigation water management;
- Microirrigation (including drip)

- Land smoothing
- Mulching
- Nutrient management
- Pest management (including a variety of pest management and IPM practices)
- Residue management
- Stripcropping
- Transition to organic production

What are the steps in the EQIP Application Process?

1. Producer files a program application at the local USDA Service Center, including several different forms and an EQIP Application Worksheet.
2. Producer works with NRCS to develop a conservation plan including identifying resource concerns on the farm, which conservation practice(s) will be employed, and a schedule of operation. Technical assistance is available from USDA, either through your local NRCS staff or Certified Technical Service Providers (TSP).
3. NRCS approves highest ranked applications for funding until all funds are obligated.
4. Contract is developed, signed and dated by applicant and NRCS.
5. Practice implementation may begin as soon as contract is signed.
6. Participant applies to NRCS for payment upon completion of work. Supporting documentation and receipts may be required. Payments will be received within 30 days.

--Environmental Quality Incentives Program, United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service

FARMER GRANT PROGRAM (SARE)

The goal of the Farmer grant program is to develop, refine, and demonstrate new sustainable techniques and to explore innovative ideas developed by farmers across the region. Information gained from these farm-based projects may be used to redirect research priorities.

To apply, you must be a farmer in the Northeast SARE region, which includes Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C. You need not be farming full time, but your operation should have an established crop or animal product that you sell on a regular basis. Nonprofit farms may apply, but the primary activity of the farm must be to produce and sell food under the kinds of economic constraints that affect commercial growers. Many community-supported farms qualify, but farms where the primary mission is educational normally do not.

For a useful guide to developing a Farmer application, with examples and explanations of what makes a strong proposal, you can visit our website <http://www.uvm.edu/~nesare/grants.html> for a copy of our 44-page booklet. We also have a checklist

for farmer grant technical advisors, a list of previously funded projects and a tip sheet specifically for extension agents. To request printed materials call 802-656-0471 or send e-mail to nesare@uvm.edu. 2008 Farmer Grant applications have a post-mark deadline of December 18, 2007. Fax and e-mail applications are not acceptable.

If you are a vegetable farmer in Massachusetts and would like assistance in applying for a farmer grant, you may contact Ruth Hazzard, 413-545-3696, rhazzard@umext.umass.edu or another member of the UMass Extension Vegetable Team.

THE SMALL AND BEGINNER FARMERS OF NEW HAMPSHIRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Oct 27-28th Winnisquam Regional High School, Tilton, NH.

The conference will include more than a dozen workshops on raising plants, animals, running a business and several "how-to" sessions. On October 28th, six (6) farm tours and demonstrations are scheduled around New Hampshire. Registration packets are available on line at www.beginnerfarmers.org, www.nhrdc.net or by calling the Conference Coordinator at (603) 627-1759.

THE HONEYBEE & THE FUTURE OF BEE-KEEPING

October 27th, 7PM - 9PM, Frontier Regional High School, South Deerfield, MA

Sponsored by the Massachusetts Beekeepers Association and the Franklin County Beekeepers Association.

This is a public event to provide education and awareness regarding pollination, honeybee problems and the future of beekeeping. Dewey Caron, PhD, University of Delaware is one of the best researchers and educators known to beekeepers. Admission is free - we will ask for donations to the Honeybee Research Fund. The presentation will be aimed at the general public & should be of interest to growers, gardeners, and anyone concerned about honeybees & pollinators. There will be time for Questions & Answers. This is a great opportunity to hear from an internationally recognized authority on all things related to honeybees.

THE MAINE ORGANIC FARMERS AND GARDENERS' ASSOCIATION (MOFGA) ANNUAL FARMER-TO-FARMER CONFERENCE

Nov 2-4: Bethel, Maine

MOFGA has moved locations this year, partially in hopes of drawing more western ME and NH farmers. This year, it will be held on November 2-4 in Bethel, Maine (which isn't far from Conway). The program includes two farm tours on Friday, and then sessions on cover crop and rotation strategies, managing labor, CSAs: beyond vegetables, cut flowers, goats, alternative energy, ecological weed control, appropriate equipment selection, and more. For those who haven't attended in the past, the format of this conference is quite different, with half of each session

devoted to a moderated group discussion.

Detailed information (as well as registration info) can be found at: <http://www.mofga.org>

SOIL HEALTH WORKSHOP AT UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

November 8, 2007, 1-4pm URI Agronomy Building and Fields, Plains Rd. Kingstown RI

Overall soil health is a topic of interest to every grower. Healthy soil results in greater yields, increased produce quality, and long-term agricultural sustainability. This workshop will identify the elements of soil health, provide soil health assessment methods, and demonstrate tillage practices that can help optimize your soil's health. There is no fee for this program.

PLEASE RSVP to URI Extension Agent Kristen Dame by November 1st: (401) 874-2967 or (401) 935-7308 or kdame@mail.uri.edu.

GREENHOUSE TOMATO CONFERENCE 2007

Tuesday, November 13, 2007, 9 am to 5pm, at the Sturbridge Host Hotel, Sturbridge MA. Topics will include choosing varieties, nutrient management, managing plant vigor, pest management including biological control, disease identification and management, and management of plant disorders. A hands-on grafting workshop will be part of the program. Cost, \$35. PAT credits will be offered.

For more information contact:

Tina Smith, University of Massachusetts, 413-545-5306, tsmith@umext.umass.edu or visit

www.umass.edu/umext/floriculture

for the registration form and more information. A printed program is also available.

VEGETABLE/STRAWBERRY IPM EDUCATOR EXCHANGE PROGRAM REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Would you like to learn more about integrated pest management for vegetables or strawberries, but don't have funds for travel? Is there a conference that you would like to attend, a research or Extension program or a farm that is doing a type of work in IPM that you would like to learn about? Do you have a commitment to sharing what you learn with growers?

The Northeast Vegetable IPM Working Group is sponsoring an Educator Exchange program. We will pay for qualified expenses to help agricultural professionals in the Northeast learn about and share integrated pest management practices.

Who may apply

This program is open to growers, vegetable and/or strawberry specialists, Cooperative Extension educators or county agents, crop consultants, government agency staff, agricultural profes-

sionals in nonprofit organizations, or anyone who will be in contact with many vegetable or strawberry growers. The person must provide unbiased, research-based information and be a resident of a northeastern state. They must have a plan for communicating what they learn, such as newsletter articles or a presentation.

Available funding

The maximum amount of money awarded will be \$800 per person. We will reimburse travel, registration fees, food (up to \$35 per day) and overnight accommodations. Educational programs and travel must take place before September 1, 2008.

What can be funded

1. Travel requests to meetings or conferences in the Northeast. Travel within the Northeast must be to a different state or sub-region. (For example, if you are from a New England state, you would not be able to receive funding to travel to the New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference.)
2. Travel requests to conferences or trainings that occur outside the Northeast region, if the training will benefit Northeastern growers.
3. Self-designed educational opportunities, such as visiting a farm, farming region, research project or laboratory where you can learn specific techniques or practices.

How to apply

Send a one to two pages application with:

1. Contact information
2. Brief biography: your position, experience (length of time in position), and responsibilities.
3. Objective and rationale: what you want to learn and why it is important to implementation of vegetable or strawberry IPM in your region.
4. Statement of work telling us why you need the funds; what educational program you wish to attend; and ways in which you will share or use the information.
5. List of expenses being requested and matching funds, if available.

Submit your application electronically to acavanagh@psis.umass.edu and in hard copy to: Ruth Hazzard, Department of Plant, Soil and Insect Sciences, 250 Natural Resources Way, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003. Questions? call (413) 545-3696

Timetable and review process

Applications are being accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis. You will receive confirmation that we received your application within three business days. Applications received before November 20 will be reviewed at the end of November. Funding of qualified proposals will be based on the availability of funds at the time of submission. For further information, including updates on funds remaining in this category throughout the year, see http://northeastipm.org/work_vegetable.cfm.

Vegetable Notes, Ruth Hazzard, editor and Amanda Brown, assistant editor. *Vegetable Notes* is published weekly from May to September and at intervals during the off-season, and includes contributions from the faculty and staff of the UMass Extension Vegetable Program, other universities and USDA agencies, growers, and private IPM consultants. Authors of articles are noted; author and photographer is R. Hazzard if none is cited.

