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**EXTENSION**



# Vegetable Notes

For Vegetable Farmers in Massachusetts

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Greenhouse Tomato School Flier

## **NEW ENGLAND VEGETABLE & FRUIT CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW**

The New England Vegetable & Fruit Conference and Trade Show will be held this December 15, 16, 17 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. A Farmer to Farmer meeting after each morning and afternoon session will bring speakers and farmers together for informal, in-depth discussion on certain issues.

There is also an extensive Trade Show with over 100 exhibitors. We hope that you will enjoy your time here, 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.

This conference is special because it 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 tell you about the latest innovations and advances in the fruit and vegetable industry. Almost every session includes both farmers and research or extension personnel, so you are getting the “best of both worlds.”

Our sponsors invite you to visit the Trade Show during the conference. We invite businesses and organizations to exhibit at the Trade Show for the purpose of providing information to the participants. While we make reasonable efforts to assure the integrity of the exhibitors, the conference sponsors do not guarantee or warranty any product exhibited; neither do the sponsors imply approval or endorsement of any product to the exclusion of others that may be available.

## **SELL YOUR POTATOES BY VARIETY NAME**

Most people do not give potatoes much thought. For a while, potatoes were on the outs because of the popularity of the many low carb diets. But people just love potatoes and it's hard to keep a good vegetable down.

Potatoes are grown in most regions of the country. If asked to name a potato variety, most people would be hard pressed to come up with a single variety name. Yukon Gold is probably the variety with the most name recognition. It originated in the Pacific Northwest. It has name recognition because consumers could recognize it for its yellow flesh. Another variety with name recognition is one of the russet varieties, Russet Burbank. This variety was also developed out west.

Potato varieties grow best where they were developed so western varieties do not grow well here in the east. Northeastern farmers would like to grow Yukon Gold or Russet varieties but they yield poorly and many growers say they will go broke growing those varieties. New York has one of the best potato breeding programs in the country at Cornell University. Cornell has developed many great varieties.

The potato harvest season is here and you will want your customers to come back and ask for the great potatoes they bought from you. The only way they can do that is if you tell them what variety they are purchasing. There are many varieties that grow well here and have great flavor, good cooking characteristics plus a wide range of textures and colors.

Potatoes are one of the vegetables grown in the Northeast that you can get almost year round. And best of all, they have not traveled 2000 miles.

Here are some of the more common potato varieties that do well in our region:

**Adirondack Blue - low starch**

A new potato that is very popular because of its blue skin and blue flesh. Excellent flavor. You cannot go wrong with this potato. Combined with Adirondack Red and a low starch white potato, makes a great red, white and blue potato salad. People love the color. Good for showing your patriotism.

**Adirondack Red - low starch**

Another new potato developed by Cornell. It has red skin and flesh. It's great for potato salad. People love the pink flesh color. You can make great chips from both the red and blue varieties.

**Keuka Gold - intermediate starch content**

A pail yellow fleshed variety with good disease resistance. Very good eating quality, and also the highest-yielding variety ever released by Cornell. This is why many farmers like this variety.

**Salem - low starch content**

Round to oblong, slightly flattened fresh-market variety with bright white skin. Has probably the best flavor of any potato you will find. Try it and you will be hooked.

**Eva - intermediate starch content**

A very attractive white-skinned variety, released by Cornell in 1999. The tubers have shallow eyes and bright skin. Does everything well in the kitchen and has good flavor. Named after the mother of the Cornell potato breeder who developed it.

**Lehigh- low starch**

This is the newest variety released by Cornell. It is a good looking table-stock potato. Good boiling quality. Has a pail yellow flesh

**Carola - intermediate starch content**

Gold skin and bright gold (yellow flesh). Very moist cooking qualities. A European variety that has gained some acceptance here.

**Katahdin - intermediate starch content**

An older fresh market variety, and the most widely grown variety in NY in the 1950s through the 70s. White flesh and bright white skin. Developed in Maine, and named after Mount Katahdin. Good all-arounder and stores very well.

**Chieftain and Red Norland - low starch content**

Both are red varieties that are widely grown in NY. Good eating quality. Great for mashed potatoes.

**Cooking tips**

- \* When boiling, the higher the starch content, the more disintegration you'll see. Red varieties are almost always low in starch, and thus hold together well.
- \* For baking: just about anything will bake. A low starch baked potato will be moist while a high starch potato will be drier. Baking texture comes down to personal preference and so it is hard to come to a consensus.
- \* For frying, high starch potatoes will chip or fry better. Sugar turns brown when cooked so you don't want a brown potato chip
- \* Generally high starch potatoes do not mash well.

*- adapted from material by John Mishanec, Cornell Cooperative Extension*

## **GUIDES TO MINIMIZE MICROBIAL FOOD SAFETY HAZARDS OF MELONS, LEAFY GREENS AND TOMATOES**

The Food and Drug Administration published draft guidance documents for melons, leafy greens and tomatoes on August 3, 2009. The industry has until November 2 to comment before final adoption. The documents are available at <http://www.fda.gov>. When you access the website, under Fruits & Vegetables choose Regulations (FDA): Produce Safety. That will bring up the article entitled "FDA Issues Draft Guidances for Tomatoes, Leafy Greens and Melons." The individual draft guidances are accessible at the bottom of the article. To make comments on the documents, access [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) and search for the following document numbers: tomatoes Docket # FDA-2009-D-0346, melon Docket # FDA-2009-D-0347 and leafy greens Docket # FDA-2009-D-0348. The individual documents you need to read are entitled "Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards of Tomatoes" "Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards of Melons" and "Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards." Make sure to follow the instructions on how to submit your comments. The original document, published in 1998, was general for the whole produce industry and has been the basis for all food safety plans and third party audits that are becoming standard in the industry. The FDA, at the urging of the industry, is developing specific guidelines for individual commodities. Green onions and herbs will probably follow since these five commodities have had the most issues with food borne illnesses. FDA's guidance documents are nonbinding recommendations to the industry, but with legislation moving through Congress, parts if not all the recommendations may be incorporated into the final regulations. Take a few minutes to download the documents and comment. These documents will affect future production and handling practices especially for the wholesale industry.

- Wesley Kline, Ph.D., Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Cumberland County

## **SARE GRANTS PROGRAMS FOR FARMERS & EXTENSION**

Northeast SARE grants are offered to eligible farmers, researchers, educators and others in the agricultural community who are working on innovative and interesting approaches to sustainable agriculture. Two of the programs may be of interest to growers and extension personnel.

### **Farmer Grants**

Farmer Grants are for commercial producers who have an innovative idea they want to test using a field trial, on-farm demonstration, or other techniques. A technical advisor--often an extension agent, crop consultant, or other service professional--is required as a project participant.

Projects should seek results other farmers can use, and all projects must have the potential to add to our knowledge about effective sustainable practices.

Note: Proposal deadlines are in December with awards announced in March. More details and application forms are available at: <http://nesare.org/get/farmers/fg-application/>

### **Partnership Grants**

Partnership Grants are reserved for agricultural service providers--extension and NRCS staff, consultants, state departments of agriculture, and others working in the agricultural community--who want to conduct on-farm demonstrations, research, marketing, and other projects with farmers as active cooperators.

The overriding goal of the Partnership program is to uncover knowledge that farmers can use, to encourage the understanding and widespread use of sustainable techniques, and to strengthen partnerships between farmers and service providers.

Projects must take place on farms or directly involve farm businesses. We fund well-designed inquiries into how agriculture can enhance the environment, improve the quality of life, or be made more profitable through good stewardship.

Sustainable agriculture is understood to be agriculture that is profitable, environmentally sound, and beneficial to the community.

Note: Proposal deadlines are in December with awards announced in March. More details and application forms are available at: <http://nesare.org/get/partnership/pg-application/>

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

**October 3, 2009. Try Something New: A Greenway Special Event.** The Boston Public Market Association is seeking farms and local food producers to participate in an upcoming event organized by the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Conservancy on Saturday, October 3, 2009 from 12pm-6pm. This fall festival is free for all ages and is meant to inspire a sense of discovery and diversity through culture, food, and fitness. This second annual festival, "Try Something New" will host food tastings, cooking demonstrations, live music, and a farmers market.

This one-day farmers market is a great opportunity to expose your products to an estimated 5,000-15,000 festival attendees. If you are interested in becoming a vendor at this event please contact us ASAP at [bostonpublicmarket@gmail.com](mailto:bostonpublicmarket@gmail.com) or call us at 857-234-2633.

More information about this event can be found at: <http://www.rosekennedygreenway.org/tsn/index.html>

**Wed October 7. Twilight Meeting at Atlas Farm – Corn Heat, Vegetable Production Systems, and Dealing With Late Blight on an Organic Farm.** 4:00pm-7:00pm. Atlas Farm, 8 Pine St., South Deerfield, MA 01373. For more information contact Andy Cavanagh at 413-577-3976 or [acavanagh@psis.umass.edu](mailto:acavanagh@psis.umass.edu).

**Thursday October 8, 2009. Advances in On-Farm Fuel Production.** 10:00am— 2:00pm. Stateline Farm 601 State Line Rd. North Bennington, VT.

John Williamson at Stateline Biofuels has been producing fuel from farm grown ingredients since 2007. Since the start, John has been focused on being as energy efficient and environmentally sustainable as possible. Join John Williamson, Chris Callahan ( Callahan Engineering), Netaka White (VSJF), and Heather Darby (UVM Extension) to learn about the exciting progress being made in approaches to on-farm fuel production!

The program is \$15. Lunch will be provided. Please RSVP by October 4 to Heather Darby @ 802-524-6501 or [heather.darby@uvm.edu](mailto:heather.darby@uvm.edu)

**Tues October 20, 2009. Nutrition for Greenhouse Crops.** Time: 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM. Publick House, Rte. 131, Sturbridge, MA. Nutrition for Greenhouse Crops will feature practical information on using water soluble fertilizers, options for organic growers, using controlled release fertilizers, identifying nutritional disorders and correcting them and interpreting water tests for fertilizer selection. (\$40 includes lunch and handouts) Program details and registration is available at: [www.umass.edu/umext/floriculture/upcoming\\_events/index.html](http://www.umass.edu/umext/floriculture/upcoming_events/index.html)

Sponsored by University of Massachusetts Extension, University of Connecticut and Northeast SARE.

For more information, contact: Tina Smith 413-545-5306 – [tsmith@umext.umass.edu](mailto:tsmith@umext.umass.edu) or Paul Lopes 508-295-2212 ext. 24 [lopes@umext.umass.edu](mailto:lopes@umext.umass.edu)

**Monday, October 19th. Wind Energy Workshop.** 2 - 5pm (Rain Date: Tuesday, October 20th; 2 - 5pm)

Are you interested in wind energy? Do you want to see and hear a 10 kW machine that has been in operation for the past 25 years? Attend this free wind energy workshop, at a farm in Riverhead, NY hosted specifically for the agricultural community and get all your questions answered. Local experts will be on hand to provide information and answer questions regarding local town regulations, LIPA rebates, tax incentives, power production capabilities, tower siting and other technical aspects.

To RSVP & for more information, contact: Nicole Spinelli, Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District, 631-727-2315 x.3 OR [nicole.spinelli@suffolkcountyny.gov](mailto:nicole.spinelli@suffolkcountyny.gov).

**Tuesday, November 3, 2009 Greenhouse and High Tunnel Tomato Conference.** 9:15 AM—3:30 PM. See attached flier for details.

**Mon Dec 14. GAP Training for Vegetable Growers.** Center of New Hampshire Radisson, Manchester NH. 1:00 pm-5:30 pm. This meeting will introduce the basics of USDA/FDA's GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) Certification Program for wholesale fruit and vegetable growers. For info, contact Shirley Mietlicki-Floyd at 413-545-4420 or [mietlicki@umext.umass.edu](mailto:mietlicki@umext.umass.edu) or Becky Grube at 603-862-3203 or [becky.grube@unh.edu](mailto:becky.grube@unh.edu).