

THE VEGETABLE AND SMALL FRUIT GAZETTE

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Tip for the Month: Here's wishing you more happiness than all my words can tell, not just alone for Christmas but for all the year as well.. Anonymous

Comments from the Editor

Bill Lamont, Department of Horticulture

The month of December, a time when the temperature drops, the woods are full of florescent orange figures and kids are dreaming of a "White Christmas". The hectic pace of spring, summer and fall on the farm finally slows down, although it is certainly a big time for the markets that have Christmas shops and sell Christmas trees. It seems that the decorations go up earlier each year. This is a time to start reflecting on the past growing season, on what worked and what didn't and to start planning for 2000. It is hard to get use to writing the year 2000. What a momentous change..Growers should be encouraged to take advantage of this time of year to attend some of the excellent upcoming educational opportunities at the county, state and national levels. I would refer you to the extensive listing of upcoming meetings at the end of the gazette. For the agents I would check the dates of your meetings to make sure that I have recorded them correctly. I would like to thank all the agents, specialists and technical support personnel who attended the Vegetable and Berry Roundtable for making it a very productive time full of many excellent ideas and suggestions. You can see I changed the name of the Vegetable Gazette. Next year we will begin a series of articles written by county agents that will cover a variety of topics. I appreciate each of you signing up for these articles. As I have said to many people around the country, I feel that you are a great group of professionals and it is my pleasure to have the opportunity to work with you as we strive to better serve the growers of Pennsylvania. As always, the Vegetable and Small Fruit Gazette Team encourages your feedback so that we can better serve your needs and address your concerns. May you have a Joyous Christmas Season, a chance to reflect back on the last 1000 years and I look forward to working with you again in 2000!!

Vegetable Varieties Worth Looking at in 2000

Mike Orzolek, Department of Horticulture

Every year there are several 100 new vegetable varieties that are released by seed companies because of their improved pest resistance, greater marketable yields, improved quality and taste, and unique or value-added characteristics. The problem for most growers is what current variety do I drop and which new variety should I try. I have put together a preview list of some of the better varieties in 1999 that should be considered for 2000.

Pepper – There are many new variety releases that have improved disease tolerance to Bacterial Leaf Spot (BLS) and at least one release with Phytophthora tolerance. However, my picks for high yielding varieties with good horticultural characteristics of fruit include; ‘Vivaldi’ from Vilmorin has performed especially good in western PA, ‘Karma’ from Harris-Moran produced exceptional large blocky fruits with thick walls, ‘Colossal’ from Novartis Seeds which can be a replacement for ‘Big Bertha’ or ‘Whopper’, ‘Lantern’ from Enza Seeds is a very early large blocky fruit, ‘SPP-6112’ from Sakata Seeds is a high yielding blocky bell with a very low percentage of cull and ‘XPH 12279’ from Asgrow is another high yielding large blocky bell with a low percentage of cull.

Cantaloupe – While ‘Athena’ is still the standard melon variety because of its disease resistance and high quality fruit, there were some newer varieties that I evaluated in 1999 including: ‘SXM 7119’ from Sunseeds which produced a marketable yield of 19.9 T/A (6,700 fruit/A) with a soluble solids of 14.0% and average fruit wt. of 5.9 lbs., ‘Eclipse’ from Petoseed had a good marketable yield, soluble solids of 12.9% and a average fruit size of 5.0 lbs and ‘Starfire’ from Harris-Moran with an average fruit size of 5.0 lbs, soluble solids of 13.0% and a sweet taste with fine texture.

Cucumber, slicing – We had 17 varieties in our trial that we harvested for 6 weeks and the top 4 entries were; ‘General Lee’ from Harris-Moran which had the highest marketable and fancy yield, ‘SCU 6601’ from Sakata Seeds which was very comparable to ‘General Lee’ but earlier, ‘Zenith’ from Harris-Moran produced 20 T/A of which 58% were in the Fancy grade and ‘SRQS 2389’ from Sunseeds was comparable to ‘Zenith’.

Cabbage – We had 21 cabbage varieties in trial that were planted in the spring and harvested from July 7 to August 1, 1999. Several of the varieties looked very good related to color, head size, and yield. ‘XPH 1805’ was very comparable to ‘Head Start’ with a marketable yield of 22 T/A, average head wt of 5.6 lbs and excellent dark green color. The ‘Dynasty’ series, ‘Blue’, ‘Silver’ and ‘Red’ was very consistent in marketable yield and average head size with ‘Blue Dynasty’ being a midseason variety (81 days), ‘Silver Dynasty’ being a late season variety (91 days) and ‘Red Dynasty’ being a 93 day red cabbage.

Cauliflower – We had 11 varieties in trial that were transplanted on July 13, 1999 and harvested from September 9 through November. Several varieties produced high quality white heads which averaged around 4 lbs/head and were very early with no more than two harvests

per plot while some of the late varieties have not produced any heads yet and required multiple harvests per plot. The 4 highest yielding cauliflower varieties were: 'Minute Man' – Petoseed (15.8 T/A), 'Fremont' – Petoseed (15.4 T/A), 'Icon' – Harris Moran (14.8 T/A) and 'Candid Charm' – Sakata Seed (14.7 T/A).

Pumpkins – After visiting the Lehigh County Pumpkin Variety Demonstration in September, I have some specific varieties that were planted at the Lehigh site that I thought looked outstanding.

Gold Fever – Rupp Seed, a 17 lb pumpkin with restricted vine growth, dark orange skin, dark green stems and 90 day maturity.

Howdy Doody – Rupp Seed, a 15 lb pumpkin with restricted vine growth, dark orange skin, dark green stems with excellent eye appeal.

Gold Standard - Rupp Seed, a 18 lb pumpkin with restricted vine growth, deep orange skin, dark green stems with excellent eye appeal.

Merlin – Harris-Moran Seed, a 15 to 22 lb pumpkin with medium-large vine, deep orange skin, green stems and powdery mildew tolerance.

Magic Lantern – Harris-Moran Seed, a 16 to 24 lb pumpkin with medium vine, deep orange skin, green stems and powdery mildew tolerance.

Small pumpkins (1 to 5 lbs) worthy of trial in 2000 are; Hybrid Pam, Pik-a-Pie (used for pies), and Snackjack (used for pumpkin seeds).

Status of the Small Fruit Production Guide

Kathy Demchak, Department of Horticulture

The Small Fruit Production Guide is being updated. If we remain on schedule (so far so good!), it will be available to growers early next March. There are a number of changes in it - most importantly, the title is being changed to "Commercial Berry Production and Pest Management Guide". This is to avoid the current confusion between the "Small Fruit Production Guide" and the "Small-Scale Fruit Production Guide".

Besides updating the obvious items, such as cultivars and recommended pesticides, several changes have been made. A section on strawberry plasticulture has been added to the strawberry chapter. John Halbrendt has supplied information on nematodes, including their effects on small fruits, how to sample for nematodes, and on using cover crops for nematode suppression. Greg Krawczyk, besides updating entomology information and insecticide recommendations, has condensed information on the toxicity of insecticides to honeybees, which will be included as an appendix. The appendix currently entitled "Further Reading" has been expanded to include useful Web sites at PSU and other Universities. These Web sites are ones I've found particularly valuable, and have a wealth of practical, easy-to-find information for growers and agents.

One item which will be missing from this version, however, is the color plates of diseases in the back. They've caused some production problems in the past, and so are being omitted this time around. Other options are being considered for replacement information. So, if you find those especially useful, keep the ones from the last edition for reference.

Besides those individuals mentioned above, thanks to M. Brittingham, J. Harper, W. Hock, J. Travis and J. Rytter for updating information on wildlife control, production budgets, pesticide safety, diseases and disease control, respectively.

I will let everyone know when the "Commercial Berry Production and Pest Management Guide" is available for purchase.

That's a Berry Good Question!!!

Kathy Demchak, Department of Horticulture

This question was asked by me.

Q. Where'd the Berry Good questions go?

A. Berry Good questions didn't exactly pour in. Of course, it didn't help that I only once published where everyone should send them. So, let me try this again! Anyone (and I do mean anyone) who has a question about small fruits should send it to me, Kathy Demchak, at 102 Tyson Bldg., University Park, PA 16802. You will be credited with the question, or can remain anonymous, as you wish. This leaves me with answering the question which follows.

Q. How many seeds are on an average strawberry fruit? (No, I'm not kidding).

A. Of course it varies with the cultivar and size of berry, but somewhere between 150 and 250 is typical... Now there's a real ice-breaker for your Holiday get-togethers!

Web-site Information on Organic Production

Bill Lamont, Department of Horticulture

I would like to thank Tim Elkner and Greg Burns for passing on this information. Rick Snyder's website in Mississippi has some organic information.
<http://ext.msstate.edu/pubs/pub2036.htm>

There are also several organic production pubs. on the ATTRA website
<http://www.attra.org/index.html>

Another site with info mixed in is Mary Peet's Sustainable Veg Production in the South
<http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/sustainable/peet/>

The title of this site is "Don't Panic, Eat Organic!"
<http://www.rain.org/~sals/my.html>

Upcoming Meetings

Bill Lamont, Department of Horticulture

Local

December 7, 1999: Western Pennsylvania Vegetable & Berry Growers Seminar, Days Inn, Butler, PA. Contact: Eric Oesterling, Westmoreland County Cooperative Extension, (412) 837-1402.

December 9&10, 1999. Greenhouse Design Short Course. Contact: Eric Vorodi (717) 263-9226

January 8-13, 2000. Pennsylvania Farm Show, Harrisburg, PA. Contact: Dr. Pete Ferretti, (814) 863-2313.

January 11, 2000: Morrison's Cove Produce Auction Meeting, Martinsburg, PA. Contact: Steve Bogash (814) 693-3265

January 13, 2000: Mexico Vegetable Growers Meeting, Mexico, PA. Contact: Steve Bogash (814) 693-3265

January 14, 2000. Susquehanna Regional Vegetable Meeting. Contact: Jeff Mizer (717) 837-4252

January 17, 2000: New Holland Vegetable Growers Day, Yoder's Restaurant, New Holland, PA. Contact: Tim Elkner (717) 394-6851

January 18-20, 2000: Lime and Fertilizer Conference. Penn Stater, University Park, PA. Contact: Dr. Herb Cole (814) 863-7235

January 20, 2000: Snyder County Produce Auction. Port Trevorton, PA. Contact: Jeff Mizer (717) 837-4252

January 25-27, 2000: Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Growers Convention, Hershey, PA. Contact: Bill Troxell (717) 694-3596.

February 3, 2000: Northeast Vegetable Growers Meeting, Thompsons Dairy Bar, Clarks Summit, PA. Contact: John Esslinger (717) 963-4761

February 10, 2000: Franklin, Cumberland, Adams Counties Vegetable Growers Day, Huntsdale, PA. Contact: Eric Vorodi (717) 263-9226

February 16, 2000: Cambria and Somerset Potato Meeting. Contact: Ron Hostetler (814) 472-7986

February 2000: Western Pennsylvania Potato Meeting. Contact: Tom Zundel (724) 662-2323

February 17, 2000: New York and Pennsylvania Producers Conference.
Contact: Greg Burns (814) 776-5331

February 22, 2000: Regional Vegetable Growers Meeting. Contact: George Perry (717) 622-4225

February 23, 2000: Southeastern Vegetable Growers Meeting. Contact: Scott Guiser (215) 345-3283

February 24, 2000: Berks County Vegetable Growers Meeting. Kutztown, PA. Contact: Berks County Extension Office (610) 378-1327

March 2, 2000: Lehigh/ Schuylkill County Potato Growers Meeting. Contact: Bob Leiby (610) 391-9840

March 14, 2000: North Central Vegetable Producers Meeting, Coudersport, PA. Contact: Greg Burns (814) 776-5331

March 15, 2000: Erie County Potato and Vegetable Growers Meeting. Contact Andy Muza (814) 825-0900

Regional

December 14-16, 1999: New England Vegetable and Berry Conference, Sturbridge Host Hotel, Sturbridge, MA. Contact: Frank Mangan (413) 545-1178.

December 14, 1999: Spinach and Greens Production Workshop, Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center, 121 Northville Rd., Bridgeton, NJ. Contact: Dr. Steve Garrison (856) 455-3100

January 6, 2000: Illiana Vegetable Growers School, Schererville, IN. Contact: Liz Maynard (219) 989-2013.

January 17-18, 2000: 36th Annual Meeting and Conference Northeast Agricultural Aviation Association, Harrisburg Marriott, Harrisburg, PA. Starts 8 am each day; pesticide credits are available for PA and other states. Contact: Glen A. Martin, Helicopter Applicators, Inc., Gettysburg, PA. (717) 337-1370.

January 18-20, 2000: New Jersey Annual Vegetable Growers Meeting, Trump Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, NJ. Contact: Phil Traino (609) 985-4382.

January 31-Feb 2, 2000: New York State Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference, Four Points Hotel, Rochester, NY. Contact: Diane Eggert (315) 656-9977.

February 10-12, 2000: Ohio Fruit and Vegetable Growers Congress, Cincinnati, OH.
Contact: Mike Pullins (614) 249-2424.

February 8-10, 2000: New York Vegetable Conference, Holiday Inn and Convention Center, Syracuse, NY. Contact: Jean Warholic (607) 539-7648.

National

December 7-9, 1999: Michigan State Horticultural Society Annual Convention and Trade show, Grand Center, Grand Rapids, MI. Contact: Shari German (616) 794-0467.

December 13-15, 1999: Southeast Vegetable and Fruit Expo, Holiday Inn, Greensboro, NC. Contact: Bonnie Holloman (919) 772-2204.

January 18-22, 2000: Great Lakes Vegetable Growers Convention, Grand Center, Grand Rapids, MI. Contact: Dave Smith (734) 848-8899.

March 2-4, 2000: National Potato Council Chip Seminar, Buffalo, NY. Contact: (716) 526-5356.