



MINNESOTA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| President | Cindy Femling |
| Vice-President | Jim Hipp |
| Secretary- Treasurer | Ron Branch |
| Board of Directors | |
| Floyd Broman | Cliff Rowe |
| Foster Mooney | Mike Thorson |
| Terry Nennich | Dan Whitcomb |
| Executive Coordinator: | Marilyn Nysetvold |



July, 2001

NOTE FROM THE BOARD:

This is the time of year when it's difficult to find an MFVGA Board member, or any grower for that matter, with a few spare minutes to share their thoughts. On behalf of the Board, the following is a recap of some up-coming events and future plans.

There are some good tour opportunities available this summer. A Vegetable IPM Field Day will be held August 22nd at the Rosemount Research and Outreach Center. If you're interested in blueberry production, check out the Blueberry Field Night on August 1st at the Central Lakes Ag Center in Staples. The North Central Research & Outreach Center will be holding their annual Horticulture Day on Wednesday, August 29th. Additional information on these opportunities is included below.

It seems that summer is finally arriving and, before we know it, fall will be here. And between summer and fall is the State Fair. Once again, we are looking for produce donations and volunteers to work the booth. This year the display will include an eight-foot refrigerated produce case which will allow us to include more perishable items in the display. Please consider helping us out.

The MFVGA Board, Extension specialists from the University of Minnesota and North Dakota State University and representatives from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture have been working on the educational program for the 2002 conference. It looks like a GOOD conference – watch for details in upcoming issues of the newsletter. Exhibitors – remember to get your applications in early!!

MFVGA is in the process of setting up a website. A survey regarding the type of information you would like included will be sent out to members this fall. Please take a few minutes to complete and return the survey and let us know how we can make the site useful for you.

As always, if you have ideas for the conference, wish to host a summer tour, or have comments for the Board, contact the MFVGA office. This is your association, we want to hear from you.

Minnesota Vegetable IPM Field Day

August 22, 2001 from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Rosemount, MN

Plan now to attend the 2001 Vegetable IPM Field Day, sponsored by the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture IPM Program. The 2001 field day will be held at the U of M Rosemount Research and Outreach Center (<http://rroc.coafes.umn.edu/>), on Wednesday, August 22, 2001 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. The field day will provide an opportunity for fresh-market growers and processors as well as crop protection and seed company reps to view numerous IPM and biological control research studies in progress.

Highlights will include:

- Sweet Corn: Corn Borer, Corn Earworm and Aphid control
- Seed treatment updates for sweet corn and snap beans
- Pumpkin/Squash: Cuke Beetle control and new traps for monitoring
- Cabbage: IPM action thresholds, biological control
- Potato: Aphid and Potato Leafhopper and biological control

Plus opportunities to view backlight and pheromone traps, hands-on insect identification ... and more!

Mark your calendars now, and watch for more details on program updates and registration info on the following web sites this summer:

Vegetable IPM Newsletter, available at <http://www.vegedge.umn.edu/mnvegnew/mnindex.htm>

or, University of Minnesota “VegEdge” web site, at <http://www.vegedge.umn.edu/>

If you have any questions, or would like to make your reservations early, please contact Mr. Patrick O’Rourke, MN PSI (Pesticide Survey and Impact) Program, Dept. of Entomology, U of M, St. Paul, MN 55108. Phone: 612-624-9292 or e-mail: orour010@tc.umn.edu.

The Rosemount Research & Outreach Center (ROC) is located southeast of Rosemount, MN in Dakota County. From Highway 3 (just south of Rosemount, or north of Farmington), go to 170th St., then go east for approximately 2.2 miles, through ONE 4-way stop intersection. Continue east to the ROC. The tour will start here, on the north side of 170th. Signs will be posted.

Other Summer Tour Opportunities:

North Central Research & Outreach Center Horticulture Day

Wednesday, August 29, 2001 from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the North Central Research & Outreach Center in Grand Rapids, MN. The Center is located on Highway 169 East on the east edge of Grand Rapids.

Blueberry Field Night To Be Held August 1st At Staples, MN

--Tips for New Growers and New Ideas for Commercial Growers--

By Jerry Wright, Extension Engineer, University of Minnesota Extension Service

Start-up tips for establishing a commercial blueberry planting and new ideas for maintaining an existing blueberry operation will be shared Wednesday evening, August 1st, at the Central Lakes Ag Center in Staples starting at 6:00 p.m. The registration desk will be open at 5:30 p.m. at the University of Minnesota blueberry plots.

Topics on marketing, cultural, irrigation and organic production practices will be discussed by University of Minnesota faculty, a blueberry grower, and a specialist from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

The field night will start with a discussion on checking out the local market potential by Larry Zilliox, Extension Educator from Douglas County. Ron Branch, a berry grower from Alexandria, will share his experiences learned over the years with blueberry production.

University of Minnesota Horticulturist, Dave Wildung, from the North Central Research and Outreach Center in Grand Rapids, will present information on soil pH, cultivars, spacing, fertility, weed control, mulch and organic production system alternatives. Jerry Wright, Extension Engineer from the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, will show irrigation options.

A registration fee of \$3 per family will be collected at the door for handouts and refreshments including blueberries and ice cream at the end of the meeting. If raining, the meeting will be held indoors.

The field night is co-sponsored by the University of Minnesota Extension Service, Central Region Partnership and Central Lakes Ag Center. For more information, contact Jerry Wright, Extension Engineer, jwright@umn.edu or 320-589-1711 (Morris) or LaVonne Blackwell, 218-894-5196 (Central Lakes Ag Center-Staples).

U of M Gleanings

By Cindy Tong, University of Minnesota – Hort. Science Department

The Good News...

After two years of searching, the Department of Horticultural Science at the University of Minnesota will be welcoming an enology project leader, Anna Katherine Mansfield. Anna is getting her M.S. from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, where she studied how different processing methods and microorganisms affect wine flavor and aroma. She will be evaluating grape varieties for use in Minnesota winemaking and extending her winemaking expertise to Minnesota grape growers, winemakers, and the general public.

The department will also be welcoming two new faculty members this summer. Stan Hokanson has been hired as woody landscape breeder and geneticist, replacing Harold Pellett, who is on a phased retirement. Brian Horgan will be joining us as a turfgrass extension specialist and researcher. Stan got his Ph.D. with James Hancock at Michigan State University, and most recently worked with the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Beltsville, Maryland, as a strawberry breeder. Stan has extensive experience with woody plants from working in nurseries doing grunt work and sales, in years prior to receiving his Ph.D. He will be expected to do research on the genetic improvement of woody landscape plants for Minnesota and teach classes for undergraduate and graduate students.

Brian Horgan worked as a “cart boy” when a teenager in Maryland, then on a golf course maintenance crew when his family moved to Michigan. He received a M.S. degree from North Carolina State University and his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. Brian’s Ph.D. work focused on measuring gases escaping from nitrogen fertilizers in turfgrass. His main job will be to be a liaison between the university and Minnesota’s turfgrass industries. He will also be expected to do research on environmental issues related to turfgrass management.

The Bad News...

We were fortunate to be able to fill the positions listed above before state budget battles started. Last year, the Department of Horticultural Science’s top priority position request was for a breeder of horticultural crops for improved human health. The current state budget situation makes it unlikely that we will be authorized to hire someone for that job, at least in the short term. Meanwhile, a couple of Minnesota programs related to fruit and vegetable production are in jeopardy.

One program is the Minnesota Grown Opportunities (MGO) Program (*not* to be confused with the Minnesota Grown marketing program with which Paul Hugunin is associated). This was jointly funded by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute, and the University of Minnesota. MGO continues work started by the Center for Alternative Plant and Animal Products (CAPAP), providing information on raising and selling alternative products via phone, mail, and a Web site (www.mgo.umn.edu). By the time you read this, MGO may be closed due to budget cuts. Last minute funding may allow the program to limp along or determine how to deal with the Web site. If the program has helped you in the past, and you appreciated the assistance, please send letters of support to Gene Hugoson, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, 90 W. Plato Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55107, or MGO, 1970 Folwell Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108.

The other program that needs to know of your support is the Washington County Extension program. This program provides information and runs sessions in agricultural production, 4-H, community issues, food and nutrition, and natural resources. Extension programs get funding from counties, the state, and the federal government. Each component is important. Without county support, Extension programs will disappear. If you live or work in Washington County and have gotten information from your Extension office, please let your county commissioners know that you value those programs.

Minnesotans can be proud that we are highly educated and wealthy and compassionate enough to help people in need. We work hard to maintain a high standard of living, but we have to take the time to ensure that programs that help educate us and support the work we like to do continue.

Minnesota Grown Notes

2001 Minnesota Grown Directory is Out!

The 2001 *Minnesota Grown Directories* are now in circulation. The name change from the former “*Fresh Produce and More*” title reflects increasing participation of specialty meat providers, Christmas tree growers, nurseries, and other non-produce growing members. Inside the book you’ll notice other format changes that should make the book even more user-friendly.

We printed 200,000 copies of the consumer guide thanks to record grower participation (480 listings sold) and the support of several advertisers (AURI, the Produce Marketing Association (PMA), MNLA, and the St. Paul and Minneapolis Farmers’ Markets).

More than 70% of the *Directories* have been distributed to Minnesota Grown supporters across the state, including libraries, realtors, travel centers, and listed farms and markets. We still have 60,000 copies looking for good homes. *Let us know if you find a retailer, church, realtor, teacher, or office manager able to get them into the hands of consumers in your area.*

Directory participants were asked to return a map with their market location along with their listing form. That information has been “digitized” and we’re working with a Geographical Information System (GIS) expert to design a system to present web surfers with accurate maps to help find participating farms and markets. Stay tuned.

Web Updates

The website (www.mda.state.mn.us/mnngrown) has added a “Producer’s Corner” which so far includes:

- a Minnesota Grown License Application,
- a brochure entitled “Answers to Ten Commonly Asked Questions about the Minnesota Grown Program”, and
- a link to the Minnesotagrown.com site for ordering Minnesota Grown apparel.

Producers who are licensed to use the Minnesota Grown logo have received the address to a web page that includes:

- the order form for free stickers and other POS items
- access to downloadable versions of the Minnesota Grown logo
- a Market Opportunities page that is used to list opportunities such as product requests for Minnesota Grown labeled products or producers.

Berry Advertising Cost-Share Program Filled

Growers of strawberries, raspberries and blueberries responded in large numbers to the invitation printed in the last Update to participate in the Minnesota Grown newspaper advertising program. Over twenty growers had signed up as this newsletter was written. To accommodate more growers, we reduced the maximum amount per grower to \$350. All ads have a common headline, the Minnesota Grown logo, and web address.

New Minnesota Showcase to be Distributed at Fair

The new version of the *Minnesota Showcase* is being assembled and will be distributed at the State Fair this fall. Approximately 25,000 copies of the tabloid-size advertising section will be distributed from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture booth and the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI) booth. The new format will be slightly smaller and will be printed on a higher quality paper to allow for better color ads. The cover will be redesigned to emphasize the coupons found inside. If successful, the format will be used for the spring 2002 *Showcase* that will be an insert to the *Star/Tribune* and *Pioneer Press*. Contact Paul Hugunin at 651-297-5510 for rates and details.

State Fair Display to be Remodeled

The Minnesota Grown booth will have a fresh new look for this year’s State Fair. Plans are still being finalized but attendees and volunteers can look forward to a new refrigerated display case for produce and other refrigerated items. This will help us ensure that the products being displayed look good at all times. Other improvements are underway as well. Speaking of the Fair, it’s never too early to sign up for a shift at the booth – call Paul Hugunin at 651-297-5510 to reserve your spot. Cheese curds, anyone?!

Summer TV Ads

Over \$45,000 of television ads promoting farmers markets and Minnesota Grown produce will be aired this summer. The ads will be aired on Channels 4, 5, 9, 11 and 29 beginning the week of July 16 and continuing through the week of August 13. News programs in the morning and early evening are the main programs we sponsor. In order to broaden our reach and frequency we will be producing a 10-second version of each ad to supplement the 30-second ads we purchase. One ad focuses on farmers markets and the second ad features produce available in grocery stores.

Free Point-of-Sale Items

Stickers, buttons, and price cards are just some of the merchandising materials available free of charge for marketers licensed to use the logo. These items make it easy to highlight your products and identify them as Minnesota Grown. If you aren't licensed, contact Paul Hugunin at 651-297-5510 for an application. The license fee is just \$5.00 per year.

Strawberry Weed Control

Weed-Inhibiting Canola Mulch

As a continuation of a study that trialed canola mulch and wool mulch as weed-control strategies in strawberry establishment, three growers planted canola last fall in fields where they intended to plant strawberries this spring. Steve Poppe in Morris, Dave Macgregor in Fairhaven, and Bill Jacobson in White Bear Lake each seeded about a half-acre of their strawberry fields to canola.

Dave got an early start and put in the canola in mid-August, seeding the variety 'Dwarf Essex,' which we had used previously in the spring-seeded canola trials. After consulting with seed dealers, though, we became concerned that 'Dwarf Essex' might not be winter-hardy enough, so we got another batch of canola seed, this time a mix of four hardy varieties of canola. Steve, Bill and Dave each planted this new variety in mid-September. Dave also used up the last of his 'Dwarf Essex' seed at that time.

At all three sites, the canola stands looked good in October. We had plenty of snow cover and winter temperatures that were not outrageously cold: good conditions for over-wintering plants. This spring, after the snow had melted, only the August-seeded 'Dwarf Essex' began to grow again. The 'Dwarf Essex' seeded in September was dead, as was the September-planted hardy mix. A disaster!

It's fortunate that Dave put in that early planting, and planted the same variety later, so that we can be fairly sure it was timing, and not variety choice, that went wrong. We're going to do some small-scale trials at the HRC beginning in early August, to find out what a cutoff date for fall planting might be.

While we're quite disappointed in these results, Dave points out that the canola made a very nice fall-planted cover crop. He didn't need to go in and till his soil at all before he and Marsha Anklam planted strawberries this spring.

Dacthal's Back

Dacthal wasn't available last year, but now is again. It's about twice as expensive as it used to be, though.

Other Weed Control Techniques

I've spoken with growers who are trying a cotton mulch, and with growers who simply hoe all summer. The wool mulch idea is still moving very slowly. We'd like to see the price come down before we pursue it any further, and that may happen in the next couple of years. The alfalfa grower from Cokato who exhibited at the trade show in February was recommending pelleted alfalfa for weed control; has anyone tried this product?

I have my ear to the ground for any other ideas; I hope if you come across anything that sounds promising, you'll let me know.

Jill MacKenzie

Assistant Extension Horticulturist—Fruit

612-624-3478 : : macke020@umn.edu

PUBLICATIONS AND RESOURCES:

Booklet Available on Labor Laws

Jack Runyan, USDA Economic Research Service, has updated his helpful 1992 booklet providing basic information about federal laws that pertain to employment in agriculture. The publication is available as a free download (pdf format). It is organized law by law, with sections on the following, as amended: Fair Labor Standards Act (1938); Occupational Safety and Health Act (1970); Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (1947); Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (MSPA, 1983); Immigration Reform and Control Act (1986); Workers Compensation (overview of state differences), Family and Medical Leave Act (1993); Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (1996); federal laws banning non job-related discrimination, and federal employment tax laws. Subsections for most of these respectively define terms, briefly describe main requirements, identify enforcement agencies and guidelines, and explain applicability and exemptions within agriculture (MSPA is the only one that does not also cover other industries). You may view or obtain a copy from USDA's website: www.usda.gov.

(Reprinted from the *Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers News*, March 2001. Reprinted there from the *Ag Executive*, Penna. Farm Bureau, No. 8, Feb. 2001

IPM Scouting Guide for Bedding Plants

The second edition of "Popular Greenhouse Pocket Guide IPM for Bedding Plants: A Scouting and Pest Management Guide" is now available. Christine Casey, former IPM Extension educator in ornamental horticulture at Cornell University, edited this guide, published by the New York State IPM Program at Cornell.

This pocket guide is a concise "how to" for starting and operating a successful IPM program in greenhouses while maintaining profitable crop production. The book helps readers to identify and monitor common insect pests, diseases and nutrient deficiencies.

The guide covers the annuals, perennials, herbs, vegetable transplants, foliage plants and flowering potted plants that are commonly produced in the greenhouse between January and July.

Topics covered include: essentials of IPM for greenhouses; developing an IPM plan, scouting techniques for insect pests and diseases; coping with non-contagious disorders such as nutrient deficiencies or spray injuries; weed management; and successful use of biological control agents.

The 117-page spiral-bound paperback contains 41 color photographs, illustrations, expanded grower case studies, indexes and an updated bibliography. The guide is designed to endure greenhouse conditions and features information from seven experts and scouting firms.

The guide retails for \$14.50 with quantity discounts available. To order, ask for item #102IPM407 from Media Services Distribution Center, 7 Business and Technology Park, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853 (607) 255-2080 or e-mail resctr@cornell.edu.

(Taken from *The Vegetable Growers News*, May 2001)

Commercial Blueberry Production Publication on the Web

The February 2001 issue of the MFVGA Newsletter included an article which stated the revision of the long-out-of-print commercial blueberry bulletin was available on the University of Minnesota Extension website. The article was premature and some of you may have had trouble finding it. The commercial blueberry production document is now available on the Extension website www.extension.umn.edu. Since it is not officially a "publication," it is not searchable

on the Extension homepage. To find it, click on “Gardening and Commercial Horticulture” then “Fruits, Commercial”. After that, search for “Commercial Blueberry Production in Minnesota and Wisconsin.” For faster service, try <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/DG2241.html>

New Insect Pest Fact Sheets Available on VegEdge Web Site

By Bill Hutchison & Suzanne Wold, Extension Entomology, University of Minnesota
(From the May 11, 2001 issue of the *Minnesota Vegetable IPM Newsletter*.)

During the past weeks, we have completed several new fact sheets for important (and/or interesting) insect pests of vegetable crops. The following fact sheets are now available:

Cabbage Maggot – <http://www.vegedge.umn.edu/vegpest/colcrop/cabmag.htm>

Corn Earworm (snap beans) – <http://www.vegedge.umn.edu/vegpest/cewbean.htm>

Wireworms – <http://www.vegedge.umn.edu/vegpest/swtcorn/wireworm.htm>

Asparagus Beetles – <http://www.vegedge.umn.edu/vegpest/aspbeet.htm>

Note: All VegEdge Fact Sheets can be accessed by linking to the FactSheet Page:
<http://www.vegedge.umn.edu/intro/pestfact.htm>

Volunteers and Produce Needed for State Fair

Change is in the works for this year's booth at the Minnesota State Fair. The Minnesota Grown Program and MFVGA are planning an updated display that will showcase Minnesota Grown products. Gone is the pickup truck and in its place will be an eight-foot refrigerated display case, which will keep the produce looking fresher longer.

Our goal is to show the thousands of consumers who visit the fair that Minnesota Grown produce is available from growers like you. Help us show them the variety and quality of produce that Minnesota has to offer by donating some of your Minnesota Grown items for the display. Because of the refrigerated case we can try to add some of the more perishable items we haven't been able to include in the past.

We are looking for as much variety as possible and we'll take anything and everything from pumpkins and squash and watermelon to hot and sweet peppers, sweetcorn, tomatoes, potatoes and carrots. We'll take root crops, cole crops vine crops, specialty crops and tree fruit. Value-added items are also welcome.

If you have items to donate, please call Marilyn at 763-434-0400 to make arrangements to get the items to the fairgrounds. This year's fair runs August 23rd through Labor Day.

We are also looking for volunteers to help man the booth. If you would like to volunteer for a four-hour shift, please call Paul Hugunin at 651-297-5510.

ATTENTION TRADE SHOW EXHIBITORS:

The 2002 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference and Trade Show will be held January 31 and February 1, 2002 at the St. Cloud Civic Center in St. Cloud, MN.

Have we received your application?

Return it as soon as possible to reserve the booth(s) you want.

If you need an application or more information, contact the MFVGA office at 763-434-0400.

DAILY CROP “ET” ESTIMATIONS AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET

By Jerry Wright, Extension Engineer

Irrigators and crop consultants in Minnesota needing daily crop water “ET” (evapotranspiration) use information for irrigation scheduling assistance can access the internet at the following website to obtain previous days’ daily crop ET potential estimation for your area:

<http://www.soils.wisc.edu/wimnext/>

The website presents daily crop ET potential estimations via color-coded contours laid over a map of Minnesota and Wisconsin. The daily estimation for a given map location can also be sent directly to the user by e-mail each day when requested at the WEB site. All daily maps remain stored on the website and are accessible any time. Information is updated 7-days a week and continues through September.

The displayed potential ET values give a reasonable estimation of the actual daily crop ET usage for a full canopy crop under sprinkler irrigation without any mulch.

For crops prior to full canopy closure, nearing maturity (leaves senescing) or dormancy, the given daily potential ET value must be reduced by a crop stage correction factor that can range from 0.2 to 1.0 depending on growth stage and type of crop. Generally, once a plant’s canopy has nearly closed the correction factor is equal to one. However, for some crops this factor may become slightly larger (1.05 to 1.15) during the crops’ critical growth period; for instance, corn between pollination and early blister or when a plant is grown on stakes like tomatoes.

When the crop is grown with mulch or trickle irrigation the full canopy correction factor must be reduced by 20 to 40 percent due to the water saving benefits of these practices.

Daily ET maps are created and managed by University of Wisconsin Extension Soils Scientist, Bill Bland. These potential ET daily maps are generated using weather data from local airports’ temperature records across the state and solar radiation estimations calculated from satellite pictures taken about every 10 minutes that measures the cloud cover density during the day for a given location.

A comparison of past years’ daily website ET values with ET estimations made from local weather stations, including Staples and Morris, has found the website data very similar in daily fluctuation, but generally it is always 5 to 10 percent greater in value than the ET rates determined with local weather stations’ measurements.

For more information on how to use daily crop ET information, contact Jerry Wright, University of Minnesota Extension Engineer, at the West Central Research and Outreach Center (320-589-1711), P.O. Box 471, Morris, MN 56267 or jwright@umn.edu.

“OPERATION PLUM WATCH” - YEAR TWO

Minnesota Department of Agriculture
PLUM POX VIRUS ALERT

Plum Pox Virus (PPV) is to stone fruits as “Foot and Mouth” disease is to cloven-hoofed mammals, minus all that media attention. The diseases share several similarities - both are caused by viruses; both are contagious and both leave their hosts in a wasted state – never again thrifty or productive. Also, the “cure” for each involves culling and destruction of all infected hosts including those nearby which might have been infected or soon could be infected.

Last year, we reported on the first ever known cases of Plum Pox Virus (PPV) in the United States which were discovered in a cluster of peach orchards in Pennsylvania. In response to a Canadian quarantine, and in the interest of protecting the nation’s stone fruits, the USDA launched a nationwide survey. Minnesota was included in that survey. After collecting 1,178 samples from commercial nursery ornamental stock, three commercial plum tree orchards, the *Prunus* collections at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum and a few wild plum populations, we are glad to report all samples were negative.

As noted last year, the likelihood of introduction into Minnesota is considered slight, but if PPV ever should appear here the consequences would be very serious. Although the U.S.A. so far appears to be free of the virus, the news from Canada is much worse. Summer 2000 surveys in the Niagara Peninsula (a prime Canadian peach and nectarine producing area) revealed infections in all the major growing areas. The outbreak was traced to a single Canadian nursery, some of whose budwood (possibly infected with PPV) was sold to growers in the United States - and a few may have been sold to local, Minnesota growers. So we are not out of the woods yet and survey work is again planned for this year and, in fact, probably for the next few years. (Canadian officials estimate at least three years will be needed to clean up infection sites in that country).

We invite you to renew your participation in “Operation Plum Watch.” You can help with the survey by contacting us for testing even if you just grow a few hobby plums on the side. Whether your trees are tested or not, it always pays to be on the look out for any changes in plant vigor or leaves. Unlike “Foot and Mouth” disease, plants may not manifest such obvious symptoms of their illness. Researchers estimate that the infections in Pennsylvania were at least five years in the making. With careful surveys and continued cooperative efforts, we hope to avoid such a fate in Minnesota.

Please contact Dwight Robinson, Plum Pox Coordinator, at (651) 296-8578; Dwight.robinson@mda.state.mn.us or FAX: (651) 296-7386. Thank you for your continued interest and assistance! Helpful web sites are included below.

www.aphis.usda.gov

www.apsnet.org

www.cas.psu.edu/docs/issues/plumpox

www.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/Agriculture/plum_pox/pda/press_release.html

www.cas.psu.edu/docs/CASDEPT/PLANT/ext/plumpoxv.html

Hunger Solutions of Minnesota Produce Program

By Paul Gifford, Program Director

I would like to take a few minutes to introduce the Produce Program which operates out of Hunger Solutions of Minnesota. This program provides fresh fruit and vegetables to people and families in need. Surplus donated produce from wholesalers, distributors and farmers is distributed to non-profit food agencies and their clients.

The Produce Program started in 1995 as a joint venture of the Second Harvest of Greater Minneapolis and the St. Paul Second Harvest Food Banks. The program is now a statewide venture of all seven Second Harvest Food Banks in Minnesota. Included with Minneapolis and St. Paul are the Food Banks in Rochester, Duluth, Grand Rapids, Crookston and Moorhead/Fargo.

I currently solicit produce from a donor base of just under 400 sources from within the metro area and greater Minnesota. I contact potential donors directly, explaining how donations offer tax advantages as well as benefiting people in need. Because produce is extremely perishable, all donations are picked up in a timely manner by the closest Food Bank and then shared with the other Food Banks. Donors only need to make one phone call to know that surplus goods will be picked up and distributed to those in need.

The metro food banks endorsed and supported the expanded program out of the belief that providing fresh produce improved nutritional and overall long-term health as well. Clients served by the agencies enthusiastically endorsed the program's merit by coming early to stand in line to receive their produce.

I visited each Food Bank in greater Minnesota to solicit their support for transporting and distributing the produce. Beyond gaining support for the project, I spent time in training the pick-up drivers on what to accept and what to graciously reject when they picked up the produce. With my assistance, shrinkage has been reduced from 15% to 6.3% (Year 2000).

Produce distributions currently are, and have been, taking place in Northfield, Hibbing, Virginia and Rushford, Minnesota. Plans are under way to expand the distributions to Brainerd, Owatonna and Faribault. After each distribution the director(s) and staff meet with me to discuss ways to reach more clients and improve on future produce distributions.

Back in January 1995 the receipted donation of produce was 616 pounds with 566 of those pounds distributed to people in need. In January of 2001 those numbers have risen to 352,454 pounds of donated produce. Totals for the year 2000 were 3,628,262 pounds donated to the St. Paul and Minneapolis Food Banks and 3,398,744 pounds distributed from the two Food Banks combined. There is still significant potential for growth both in donations to be received and in pounds of produce to be distributed.

For more information on how you can contribute your excess produce; contact Paul Gifford, program director of Hunger Solutions Minnesota, at 612-991-4077.