



# MINNESOTA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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## Note from the Board

By Gary Pahl  
Pahl Farms, Inc., Apple Valley, MN

Well, most of us can see the light at the end of the tunnel. With the exception of cabbage, pumpkins, squash and the other miscellaneous fall items, we should be done by Christmas. The season has once again tried our patience - starting out with a cold spring; then a wet, cold spring turning drier than a bone; followed by hot, humid weather and finally, a monsoon.

We farm about 1,100 acres nestled in the Apple Valley, Rosemount area. Our main crops include sweet corn, cabbage, squash, green beans and pumpkins. About 50 percent of our produce stays in the metro area, but we do ship as far as Dallas. This year we tried to expand green beans and more sweet corn, but, due to the lack of warm weather this spring, our plantings were larger and further spread out due to rain and what not. Being eternal optimists, we always believe next growing season will be better and more profitable.

So cheers...here is to higher prices and a bountiful harvest.

## The Meaning of Membership

Membership in the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association creates a sense of belonging, a connection with other members, an open discussion of problems and solutions. It provides a means to facilitate research and present research results. Membership provides a link to production specialists, marketing partners and educational opportunities.

Current and projected state and federal deficits mean that less money is available to fund on-going programs. Significant changes and cuts are happening within the University of Minnesota Extension Service. As these changes take place, the role of the association becomes more important.

During the last year MFVGA had the opportunity to apply for grant money that became available last fall through a one-time federal emergency farm assistance package designed to help stimulate the state's specialty crop industry. This was the first time emergency funds were appropriated for non-program crops.

The Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association submitted a proposal to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and was awarded a total of \$160,000 to be used for a variety of projects in support of Minnesota's fruit and vegetable producers. That money doesn't stay with the association. That money sponsors specific research and marketing projects - projects selected by the MFVGA Board of Directors to help as many of Minnesota's fruit and vegetable growers as possible. Some of the grant dollars will be used to fund some of the conference expenses for speakers, travel, etc. and for grant administration. Funding also continues the publication and distribution of the *MN Vegetable IPM Newsletter*, a valuable resource for Minnesota's vegetable growers.

MFVGA is a non-profit association committed to Minnesota's fruit and vegetable growers and related agri-businesses. If growers, businesses and other interested individuals are committed to the association, MFVGA can continue to be a vital resource for area growers. YOUR involvement is the key to success – both for you as an individual grower, for the association and the industry as a whole.

In addition, your dues help support the Minnesota Grown Promotion Group. MFVGA works with the Minnesota Grown program and others to help promote local growers and their products. Your dues help fund the MFVGA Newsletter. The newsletter is designed to provide information on additional resources that are available to growers, to provide information on the annual conference and trade show and to provide vendors with the opportunity to keep growers aware of current changes in the industry.

Your dues provide administrative support which includes the handling of routine association business, organizing of the conference and trade show, editing and mailing of the newsletter, compiling financial information and preparing reports and tax returns and grant administration. The office acts as a central location for the exchange of information. When we receive information that you need to know about, it's included in the next issue of the newsletter or mailed directly to members.

The association has the opportunity to apply for grant dollars that can be used to fund specific projects that can help you. Individual growers are not eligible to apply for these dollars.

Membership renewal notices have been sent to existing members. MFVGA is your association. Make it work for you. Take advantage of the opportunities. Please send in your membership dues today.

We welcome new members. If you have a neighboring grower who isn't a member, tell them about MFVGA! A membership application can be found under "Membership Application" on the home page.

## **UPDATE – SPECIALTY CROPS GRANT PROJECTS**

We are making progress on the specialty crops grant projects. Data is being collected on various research projects, most of which will be analyzed this fall and winter. Research results from this growing season will be presented at the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference in St. Cloud, MN on February 6-8, 2003.

Research projects funded with specialty crop dollars focus on high tunnel vegetable production systems in northern Minnesota, organic blueberry production, alternative weed control strategies in strawberries (flame burning for weed control and renovation and the use of wool/canola mulch for weed control), continuing research on small fruit cultivars, blueberry pruning systems, strawberry bacterial angular leaf spot (BALS) and the evaluation of winter hardiness of apples in Zone 3.

Specialty Crops funding also helps continue the writing and publication of the *Minnesota Vegetable IPM Newsletter*. To access the web version of the newsletter, log on to the VegEdge at <http://www.vedge.umn.edu>.

Marketing projects are also underway. The following projects are funded by specialty crops grant dollars.

### **Farmers' Market Cost-Share Program:**

Eleven farmers' markets from throughout Minnesota submitted applications for cost-share advertising dollars. Dollars are limited and applications considered on a first-come, first-served basis. Cost-share dollars will also be available for the 2003 growing season. Plan now for next year's promotion and advertising. For more information and guidelines, contact Marilyn Johnson at 763-434-0400. Applications for the 2003 program will be mailed to the managers of established farmers' markets early next spring.

**Partnership with the Midwest Food Alliance:**

We are partnering with the Midwest Food Alliance and the Minnesota Grown program to promote Minnesota fruits and vegetables in grocery stores. Thirty-eight stores are currently participating in the Midwest Food Alliance Program including Coborn's, Inc. (18 Coborn's and 9 Cash Wise stores throughout Minnesota), Kowalski's Markets (7 stores in the Twin Cities), Mississippi Market Natural Food Co-op (2 stores in St. Paul), River Market Community Co-op (1 store in Stillwater) and Hy Vee (1 store in Barlow's Plaza in Rochester).

The Midwest Food Alliance worked with the five retail partners to plan 63 store events and demonstrations scheduled from September 14 to November 9 and will highlight combinations of apples, cider, squash and cole crops. The Minnesota Grown Program is providing promotional support and point-of-sale materials.

**Development of a "Minnesota Grown" Produce Bag:**

We are working to develop a plastic T-shirt style bag that contains the Minnesota Grown logo and general artwork depicting a variety of fruits and vegetables. Space will be available for individual farmers' markets or retail operations to include specific information (name, address, etc.) for an additional charge. We are hoping to have sample bags available at the 2003 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference and Trade Show in February. Advance orders will be taken and the bags should be available for the 2003 growing season. More details will be included in future issues of the MFVGA Newsletter and at the Conference.

**Direct Marketing Efforts:**

The MFVGA Board is currently considering direct marketing projects. Part of this money will help expand the berry advertising cost-share program available through the Minnesota Grown Program. Direct marketing dollars will also help fund the development of the produce bag. Other projects will be determined by the MFVGA Board.

**Minnesota Grown Passport Program:**

MFVGA is one of the co-sponsors of the Minnesota Grown Passport Program which is featured in the *2002 Minnesota Grown Directory*. The program is designed to increase consumer visits to the locations listed in the *Directory*. Encourage your customers to participate and send in their completed entry forms.

Funding for these projects is provided by dollars made available by a one-time federal emergency farm assistance package designed to help stimulate the state's specialty crop industry. Funding is from the USDA through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

## **Record Number of Strawberry and Raspberry Plants Sold in 2002**

Over 360,000 strawberry and raspberry plants were ordered through MFVGA and delivered to area growers this spring.

Proceeds from the plant sales help fund several small fruit breeding and management studies, including cultivar and selection trials in strawberries and blueberries. This funding also supports the strawberry and blueberry breeding and evaluation projects directed by Dr. Jim Luby at the Horticulture Research Center in Victoria, the Sand Plains Station in Becker and the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris.

As you plan for next season, consider ordering your strawberry and raspberry plants through MFVGA. You get quality plants at affordable prices and the proceeds help fund small fruit research at the University of Minnesota, which benefits you, and berry growers throughout the region.

# Food Safety During Harvest

*Craig Hollingsworth, UMass Extension*

(Reprinted from the *Massachusetts Berry Notes*, June 13, 2002, Vol. 14, No. 9)

Good sanitation practices during harvesting can help to reduce the risk of microbial contamination of fresh produce. Soil, fertilizers, harvesting equipment, water, workers, pets and pests can all be sources of harmful micro-organisms that can cause foodborne illness. Therefore, it is important that growers set up measures to help prevent these sources of micro-organisms from contaminating produce.

Good sanitation practices include cleaning and sanitizing all food contact surfaces, encouraging worker hygiene and training and keeping animals out of fields, orchards and packing houses.

## What do we mean by "food contact surface", "cleaning" and "sanitizing"?

A **food contact surface** is a surface that comes into contact with the fresh produce any time during harvesting, packing or transporting.

**Cleaning** means to remove soil and residues from food contact surfaces by washing and scrubbing with soap or detergent, then rinsing with clean potable water.

**Sanitizing** means to treat a food contact surface with a sanitizing solution that will kill most micro-organisms. Surfaces must be cleaned first before they can be sanitized. Soil and soap residues can inactivate the sanitizing solution.

A **sanitizing solution** is made by mixing a small measured amount of a sanitizer with potable water according to the directions given by the manufacturer.

A **sanitizer** is a chemical compound designed to kill micro-organisms. The most commonly used are chlorine bleach and quaternary ammonium compounds.

## Take a walk through your harvesting operation and check for these signs of potential food safety hazards:

- Pets, livestock, poultry or wildlife in fields
- Human or animal waste in fields and orchards
- Sick or unclean workers
- Dirty harvest containers
- Produce laden with dirt or manure
- Broken and dirty harvest equipment

## What can you do?

- Wash, rinse and sanitize, when possible and practical, all crop containers before harvest.
- When sanitizing, use an approved sanitizer according to the manufacturer's directions. Common sanitizers include chlorine bleach and quaternary ammonia. Store sanitizers and solutions away from the produce.
- Cover harvest containers to keep crop dust, animals, insects and birds out.
- Clean harvesting aids each day with potable water. This means they should be free of visible soil and residue.
- Keep harvesting equipment in good working order. Set up a maintenance schedule.
- Train workers to follow good hygiene practices.
- Do not haul produce in equipment that has been used to transport garbage, manure or animals.

[Adapted from the New England Extension Food Safety Consortium]

## **U of M Gleanings**

By Cindy Tong, Dept. of Horticultural Science  
University of Minnesota

Hoo-boy! It was a hot and rainy June and July this year, and August seemed to be above average in temperature, too. My potatoes got hit badly with leafhoppers and my cucurbits got zapped by squash bugs and the disease they vector. Most of the phone calls I got this summer had to do with flowers falling off plants and poor fruit set. These were due, of course, to the heat. Tomato and pepper flowers fall off when temperatures get above 90 °F, and there's not much one can do about it except plant varieties that are more heat tolerant. Shallots seemed to die off early, too.

Choosing the right varieties to grow is probably one of the most important decisions a grower has to make. I got a phone call about golden flecks on tomatoes. This is only a surface blemish and does not affect the eating or keeping quality of the fruit. Some varieties are more susceptible to it than others. Most of the people I showed the gold flecked tomatoes to said that they'd seen it before and would still buy the fruit, so it's probably not a big economic problem. One person said that the seller should just tell the public that it's a new variety, and to charge more!

What makes a variety a variety? Well, it should be genetically different from any other variety. According to Jim Luby, fruit breeder, it can take 10 years to develop a new strawberry variety, 15 years for blueberries, 20 years for apples, and 8-10 years for vegetable crops. Legally, a new variety has to have a combination of traits that make it distinguishable from other varieties. These traits should be uniform among individuals of that variety and consistent from year to year. Horticultural varieties are different from botanical varieties. Horticultural varieties are economic products developed for the people who use them – growers, consumers, and seed or nursery producers and sellers. Botanical varieties are categories like “subspecies”, used to describe and distinguish one type of a plant from another.

People developing new varieties in the Department of Horticultural Science at the Univ. of Minnesota currently includes the fruit breeders Jim Luby, David Bedford, and Peter Hempsted; a potato breeder, Christian Thill; Neil Anderson, a floriculture crop breeder; and Stan Hokanson, a woody plant breeder. Besides these folks, though, there are other people testing new varieties. Paul Li, who normally works to understand how plants tolerate chilling temperatures, has been developing and testing different varieties of vegetable soybeans (aka edamame), and is willing to share seed. He gave me 'UM2' and 'UM3' (okay, so the names aren't catchy). Both produce lots of seeds, as much as the commercial varieties, Butterbeans and Green Envy. 'UM2' and 'UM3' aren't as sweet as 'Butterbeans', but still good to eat when cooked. If you grow vegetable soybeans and want some free seeds, let me know. Drop me a line (612-624-3419; c-tong@umn.edu), tell me how much you want, and where to send it.

## **MFVGA Strawberry Field Day in Morris**

The MFVGA berry field day on July 25 had very low attendance. It's too bad, because Steve Poppe did a great job of talking about his operation and showing us around. Of particular interest was Steve's center-pivot irrigation system. Unusual, but a really good idea!

## **Raspberry Problems This Year**

This was a great growing season for plant pathogens! Frequent and abundant rainfall allowed a number of fungal organisms to thrive, especially in raspberry plantings. I saw a number of samples of raspberry canes that were wilting and dying just as the harvest was about to begin. Diseases included anthracnose, rhizoctonia, septoria leaf spot, and probably others.

Many years, raspberry growers are able to control diseases without spraying fungicides. Thinning the canes, keeping the rows narrow, promptly removing spent floricanes: these practices are often sufficient. This year, they weren't in all cases. If your raspberries fell victim to disease this year, be especially vigilant in your sanitation. Get all the diseased canes out of the planting, even if you usually just toss the prunings into the alleys and chop them with the mower. Make sure you've thinned primocanes sufficiently to encourage good air circulation, and thin them well next spring.

I don't like to recommend fungicides if you haven't done everything cultural you can to prevent disease, but if the diseases won this year, you may want to consider spraying next year. I'm happy to help you make fungicide decisions; please feel free to contact me.

Two good references about bramble culture and pest control are:

Cornell's "Bramble Production Guide" (188 pages, \$45 plus \$5.50 s/h, from NRAES, 152 Riley-Robb Hall, Ithaca NY 14853-5701).

Ohio State's new "Brambles—Production Management and Marketing" (92 pages, \$6.50 plus \$4.50 s/h from Media Distribution, 385 Kottman Hall, 2021 Coffey Rd., Columbus OH 43210-1044). This bulletin is also on-line at <http://ohioline.ag.ohio-state.edu>.

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## **Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference**

The MFVGA Board is currently finalizing plans for the 2003 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference. The educational program will include a wide variety of sessions on vegetable, apple and berry production and marketing.

We are also planning sessions on soil health and composting, weed management, food safety, merchandising, business management, calibrating application equipment plus much more.

The conference will be held February 6-8, 2003 at the St. Cloud Civic Center in St. Cloud, Minnesota. The trade show will be held Thursday and Friday, February 6 & 7, 2003.

Mark your calendars now and plan to attend. The full conference program and registration information will be included in the December issue of the MFVGA Newsletter.

## **USDA Launches Farm Bill Website**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has launched a website with information on the newly enacted farm bill.

The website can be directly accessed from USDA's official website at [www.usda.gov/farmbill](http://www.usda.gov/farmbill) or by simply clicking on the 2002 Farm Bill icon on USDA's main website at [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov). The 2002 Farm Bill icon will also appear on USDA agency websites.

The website includes farm bill program details, questions and answers, program applications and sign-up forms, as well as other important materials from USDA agencies on farm bill implementation. The website will also

contain advanced electronic applications to help program applicants receive program benefits faster and more efficiently.

The website will help farmers, ranchers and others locate information through one site rather than searching through web pages of the many agencies that make up USDA. Information will be indexed by farm bill title and by agency. Users will be able to access specific agency information through the site and easily return to the home page by clicking on the Farm Bill 2002 logo located throughout USDA agencies' web pages.

Information to be posted on the site will include:

- A comparison of 1996 and 2002 Farm Bill provisions.
- Fact sheets on changes in conservation programs.
- Information from the Farm Service Agency on program details and instructions on how to calculate new yields.
- On-line applications and electronic forms to help make processing time more efficient.

The website will be updated regularly as new information and program announcements become available. The "What's New" link will alert users to updates and added information.

*(Taken from the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers News – July 2002)*

## **Minnesota Grown Notes**

(Minnesota Grown information is supplied to MFVGA by Paul Hugunin (651-297-5510) from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Ag Marketing Services Division.)

### ***2002 Apple Promotions***

More Minnesota Grown apple point-of-sale materials are available this fall than ever before. New for this fall is a 7" x 11" laminated price card with room to write in the variety name and price. This new card is available in addition to full-color cards previously done for Haralson, Regent, Fireside, Honeycrisp, McIntosh, and Cortland apples. Those same six varieties are featured on the large laminated posters that were done last year. All of these items are available free of charge. To order, call Paul Hugunin at 651-297-5510.

Members of the Minnesota Apple Growers Association are also eligible for cost-share sampling funds if they will be conducting in-store sampling activities in grocery stores or other wholesale accounts. Funds will be used to reimburse growers for out-of-pocket expenses, such as labor and supplies, but the cost of apples must be covered by the grower or retailer. Processed products such as ciders and pies made from Minnesota Grown apples are also eligible for the cost-share funds. A limited amount of funds are available and they are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Contact Paul Hugunin at 651-297-5510 to sign up or with any questions.

Other products such as Quik Lok tags and PLU stickers with the Minnesota Grown logo can be purchased from UAP-LaCrescent. Contact UAP directly at 1-800-551-5708 for pricing and details.

### ***Partnership with Midwest Food Alliance Expands Reach of Minnesota Grown Program***

The Minnesota Grown Program is participating in a series of joint promotional events with the Midwest Food Alliance this fall. The partnership will allow both organizations to stretch marketing dollars and enables grocery stores to have larger events with more locally produced products. Participating stores will be using in-store signage to highlight Minnesota Grown and Midwest Food Alliance approved products and several stores will also be conducting special events to highlight the products and their producers. Kowalski's, Coborns and some Hy-Vee stores are among those participating this fall.

### ***Christmas Tree Campaign***

Minnesota Christmas tree growers have lots of promotional opportunities available through the Minnesota Grown Program this season. A newspaper ad cost-share program, a new outdoor banner program, metro radio ads, and a new promotion with KSTP-TV are all included in the campaign this season.

### ***Free Stickers, Posters and Price Cards Available***

Be sure to take advantage of the Minnesota Grown logo in your displays and advertising this fall. The logo provides your customers with the assurance that they are buying a product that was grown on a farm right here in Minnesota. A myriad of stickers, posters, price cards, buttons and other items are available FREE to licensed marketers. The cost of the license is just \$5 per year. Over 700 marketers are already licensed to use the logo – more than ever before!

If a new or improved label, bag or box is in your future, don't forget to add the Minnesota Grown logo. The Minnesota Grown Promotion Group will reimburse you for up to \$100 of your design charges. Contact Paul Hugunin at 651-297-5510 to register.

### ***Minnesota Grown Directory***

The *Directory* is definitely a year-round project. The '03 version is in the early stages of planning, including continual website development, recruitment of a cover sponsor and other advertisers, planning for a "User Survey" and reviewing options for front cover artwork.

Sponsors and advertisers are crucial to the *Directory's* success. We appreciate the 2002 participation of the MN Nursery & Landscape Association, MN Turkey Council, Midwest Food Alliance, MN Elk Breeders Association, MN Beef Council, Minneapolis Farmers' Market, AURI, MN Pork Producers, MN Buffalo Association, and the St. Paul Farmers' Market! Please let us know if you have any ideas or leads regarding companies that might benefit from advertising in the *Directory* or even in being a cover sponsor.

We have received several *Minnesota Grown Passport* entries from customers that visit three listed locations, or the same locations on three separate occasions (see page 5 of the *Directory*). Please continue to sign their passport entries and encourage participation. Your customers would be happy to win a vacation to Sugar Lake Lodge, Camp Snoopy wristbands, MN Grown apparel, and gift certificates to your farm *at no cost to you!* The Minnesota Grown Passport promotion is funded by the MFVGA, MN Nursery & Landscape Association, MN Apple Growers Association, and the MN Christmas Tree Association.

### ***Many Growers Used Berry Cost-share***

Twenty-four berry growers participated in the advertising cost-share program this summer. Ads were run all over the state from Zumbrota to Grand Rapids. The *Pioneer Press* and the northern zone of the *Star Tribune* were among the metro papers that ran ads for Minnesota Grown berries. All ads included the Minnesota Grown logo and website.

### ***Download the Logo and Order Form off the Web***

The quickest way to get the point-of-sale material order form or the Minnesota Grown logo is to download from the licensed producer only web page. This page is just for marketers that are licensed to use the Minnesota Grown logo and is not linked to the rest of the Minnesota Grown web pages. If you are licensed to use the logo and have misplaced the web address, just send an e-mail to Brian or Paul and we'll send the link to you. Along with the point-of-sale material order form you'll have access to the Minnesota Grown logo in several different formats.

## State Fair Thank You

It takes a lot of people and a lot of cooperation to make the “Great Minnesota Get-Together” a success. The Minnesota Grown booth is also a cooperative effort and the booth would not be possible without the help of many people. Some people donate produce and other items for the display. Some donate their time to set up the booth. Some donate time to staff the booth. All are greatly appreciated.

Thank you to area producers who donated produce for the MFVGA/Minnesota Grown display, despite the weather and a challenging growing season. Produce was donated by Dehn’s Garden, Inc. (Andover, MN), Ed Fields & Sons, Inc. (Andover, MN), Green Barn Garden Center (Isanti, MN), Jewel Lane Farm (Chisago City, MN), Knoll Farms, Inc. (Andover, MN), Pahl Farms, Inc. (Apple Valley, MN) and Pine Tree Orchards, Inc. (White Bear Lake, MN).

Radishes for sampling were donated by Knoll Farms, Inc. and Ed Fields & Sons, Inc., both in Andover, MN. We thank them for giving some people the opportunity to try their first radish. Those who love radishes came back to the booth for seconds.

We also wish to extend special thanks to Ken Slyzuk for storing the radishes until they were brought down to the fair and to Bonnie Dehn from Dehn’s Garden for providing beautiful fresh and dried flower arrangements for the booth. Thanks also go to Pine Tree Orchards, Inc. for letting us store the radishes and other produce in their cooler on the fairgrounds.

Spending time in the booth is an experience. A lot of people see the radishes and say “Where’s the salt?” If you volunteered for a shift or two in the booth – thank you.

A special “THANK YOU” to Tim Peterson of H. Brooks & Co. for an outstanding job of setting the refrigerated display case. Tim’s merchandising skills resulted in numerous comments from people who stated that it was the best display yet. Thanks, Tim!

To everyone involved in making the Minnesota Grown booth a success – **Thank You.**